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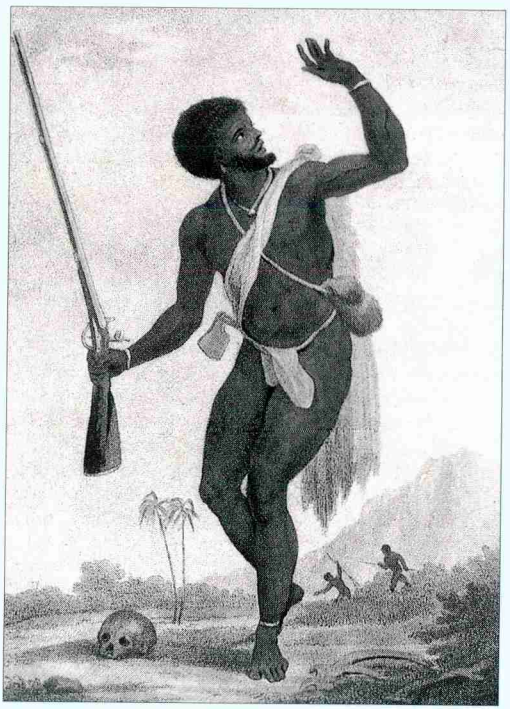

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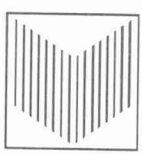

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Introduction

The diversity of the contributions assembled in this volume is fully intended. It is a reflection of an interdisciplinary approach and above all of a historiographical scepticism which characterises postmodernist approaches and which is also apparent in the title of this volume: "histories" – also in the meaning of fictional stories[1] – should be considered as an alternative or at least as a necessary completion of "history" because traditional historiographical discourse tends to screen out a number of well-known contradictions. Above all, it is becoming increasingly obvious that traditional historical discourses also implicitly pursue goals which reach beyond the objective, rational and enlightened analysis of the past. They confer and describe a collective identity which results from the confirmation of foundational myths, from the establishment of a canon of outstanding and decisive events which both explain the particular fate of the social group concerned and their particular home rights to their part of the world.

The enlightened historical discourse deliberately eliminates a particularity pertaining to any other approach: the knowledge that it is neither total nor infinite. It will always consist of a collection of "(hi)stories" which changes in the course of time and with the change of the story-teller. The diversity of views and interpretations represent a necessary diversity of voices due to the fact that each history and story depends on a story-teller who will transcribe the past to the requirements of the present. Whenever they are told, each story links two levels of time – the time of the event and the time of its narration.

The polyphony engendered by dissolving History into (hi)stories is closely related to another basic problem which nearly all the contributors take into account: the question of the borderline between the documentary and the fictional which appears less and less clear; the concepts of truth and authenticity, which produce this distinction, are becoming very relative. Different epochs and different cultures define these concepts differently and even within our own cultures, various notions of truth may coexist: "true" may, for instance, mean "verifiable", "relevant" or "significant". Truth and invention are not always basic categories which exist prior to the text; particularly when dealing with colonial documents, it is not difficult to prove that the extensively used affirmation of truth

[1] Unfortunately the plural of history does not offer the same double meaning in English as in other languages of the Congress; in French, Spanish and German it corresponds to the term "story", a wordplay which we will reproduce by using brackets - "(hi)stories" - whenever the double meaning is referred to.

("historia verdadera") belongs to the *genre* and is part of the fiction. Whenever the notion of truth is overstressed, we have good reason to be suspicious, for it may indicate a strong necessity on the part of the author to dissimulate a deficiency in legitimisation. On the other hand, the deliberate encoding of "true" events is an equally well-known strategy. In a number of genres, the mixing of the documentary and the fictional is a current practice. This is the case, for example, with the testimonials by the Cuban author Miguel Barnet. In the course of their publication, the search for a scientific "truth" in his four testimonials gradually disappears in favour of a literary representation.

The general epistemological problems of historiography as they appear in postmodern thought, for instance, are increased by the more specific problems related to the Caribbean area. In a general sense, a colonial history may be written from two very different points of view: one pertains to the colonial powers for whom colonial history is part of their national history; another one pertains to the colonised whose voice will not be heard unless they implicitly employ the style and contents of the dominant history. Thus the "history of resistance" becomes a complement to the "history of power". In the Caribbean slave societies, the discourse of the victims is silenced by the continuous repression; part of this consists in excluding the slaves from the written word and the corresponding styles of language. There is no history of slavery told by those who suffered from it.

The still vivid debates on the questions of how far parts or traces of African culture and languages eventually survived their transfer to the Americas and whether the slaves were able to safeguard a cultural personality different from that of the oppressors show the entrenchment of Western ignorance and prejudice. Even when speaking on behalf of the slave, and also when uttering ritual excuses while remembering the history of slavery, Europeans continue their patriarchal attitudes which are part of the heritage of abolitionism. Whether guilty or not, Europeans present themselves as actors in the colonial drama; whether they enslave or free their victims, they implicitly reduce them to objects without their own identity, culture and capacity to act.

The problems of the distorted subject-object-relations remain until today and make it difficult to conceive of a genuine Caribbean history along the lines of traditional historiography. It seems impossible to overcome the bias of colonial source materials and their dependence on the colonial perspective. There is no "heroic history" of the Caribbean either in the sense of foundational myths or of 19th-century nationism. Even the example of the Maroon slaves is ambiguous; the history of their deeds never became the backbone of an epic or popular history of the Caribbean which would have saved it from oblivion in the oral culture. Today we

are becoming more and more aware that the memory of the past and the creation of historical discourses is liable to vary considerably according to the social or regional background of the people who create it. This is all the more true of the Caribbean area which offers a degree of heterogeneity seldom found in other parts of the world. Though the perspectives of history may differ, they are characterised by the close neighbourhood from which all emerge and they interlace and complete each other. Where History is absent, histories assume its role. These may be stories which thrive anonymously within oral cultures or are created by well known writers like Edouard Glissant who openly declared his novels to be attempts to fill the gaps left by historiography.

All these questions and problems which remain unsolved and unsolvable make up the general background of the fourteen essays in this volume, presented at the *IV. Interdisciplinary Congress of the Society of Caribbean Research* which took place at the Iberoamerican Institute in Berlin, Germany. It is clear from the preceding discussion that, whatever the selection, it can never be all-encompassing, systematic and representative. The more important guidelines of the present publication were the handling of metahistorical problems and the question of evaluating source material which includes the interpretation of fictional or non-fictional texts. In a general way, the articles in this volume are intended to present and integrate research on two levels. First, they treat a particular problem, but they also reflect on their own generation and position within history in a larger sense. Second, they are part of a "history of history" within an area which has been one of the main battle-grounds of emerging modernity while hardly being aware of it.

The articles in this volume were grouped into three main sections which are based on the considerations previously discussed. In the first section the articles address the particular problems related to colonial history and its source material. The question of authorship and its legitimisation is the subject of Sabine Hofmann's essay on the chronicles of Rochefort and Du Tertre. The Dutch historian Wim Hoogbergen, who is a renowned specialist in Maroon cultures, treats the historiographical problems due to the scarcity of source material when dealing with the history of resistance. His contribution focuses on the famous Brazilian Maroon community of Palmares, but he also refers to data from neighbouring Surinam. Even more than in comparable cases, Palmares has become the site of fictions; the lack of reliable sources gives room for the thriving of myths which, though dubious from a historiographical point of view, are very important for the identity of the Afro-Brazilian community. In a similar way, the British historian Gad Heuman discusses the echo the Morant Bay rebellion in Jamaica has received in literary and documentary texts. He discusses how and to what degree such texts are influenced by the need

for interpretations which are "suitable" according to the changing needs of the Jamaican collectivity.

The second section begins with a voluminous contribution by the British anthropologist Jean Besson. She focuses on the statement by Genovese that "The history of the lower classes has yet to be written". Besson's general theme is the subsequently necessary change of perspective and historical methodology which has to take anthropology and neighbouring disciplines into account. The essay by Barbara Bush is similarly comprehensive, although it is oriented towards the understanding of women during slavery. Both articles discuss, within their broad scope, general concepts such as the creolisation processes (Jean Besson) or Afro-American identities (Barbara Bush) as bases of Caribbean cultures which transcend colonial and linguistic borders of a very heterogeneous area. The extension of this area is illustrated by the following two articles which focus on a Caribbean rim country – the Atlantic Coast of Columbia. Annedore Cruz Benedetti's topic is the Caribbean oral culture, its narrative genres and the animal tales in particular. Juliana Ströbele-Gregor deals with discursive strategies which "fictionalise" the prevailing traditional gender relations. In the last contribution in this section, Aart Broek uses the example of the former Dutch Caribbean colonies to describe the difficulties which accompany the transition from the oral to the literate culture of a Creole language. These range from refusal and scepticism to the problems which arise when the dominant culture tries to control this transitional process. The article also demonstrates that the introduction of Creole literacy is the only possibility to maintain the language and its oral literature traditions.

The third part of the volume is dedicated to Caribbean fictional literature and its multiple relations with historiography. The literature may simply relate history. It may complement it by "invention" and, not the least important, it makes history and historiography a part of a metahistorical discourse. The section starts with the article by Susanne Klengel which illustrates the cultivation of literariness as an important contradiction when it is part of a culture which is different from that which it tries to conceive and to represent. Talking about the other, making him a subject of literature may result in its invention or in the destruction of its autonomy. Klengel opposes a particular approach based on a process of continuous self-reflection; the surrealist discourse on America as demonstrated in André Breton's attitude towards America is presented as such a possible alternative.

The literary work by Manuel Zeno Gandía is the topic of Wolfgang Binder's essay which also illustrates the problem of an adequate attitude towards the other. In the eyes of Zeno Gandía, Puerto Rico is a "sick world" which is a characteristic end-of-century perspective determined

by positivism and naturalism. Kleinert's complex analysis of one of the novels by Cabrera Infante is also based on a sceptical view of history. Cabrera adopting a larger context of narrative strategies and ideas, is more sophisticated and implicitly leads towards a post-modern understanding of history. The articles by Helmtrud Rumpf and Kathleen Gyssels present the *Antillanité* in the French Caribbean which is a philosophical and literary movement of prime importance to our subject. Rumpf discusses the theoretical base of this movement and demonstrates its transposition into fictional literature. The literary paradigm used by both Rumpf and Gyssels is the novels by Simone Schwarz-Bart which are among the most prominent examples of empowering history through fiction. After these very complex and sophisticated positions and theories - which, despite their regional designation, aim at a French and international readership - the last contribution brings us back to a more Caribbean literature: Cornelia Fichtl discusses the Jamaican women's theatre and its social functions which are more directly related to Caribbean space and Caribbean women and men.

In conclusion, we want to express our thanks to all the friends and colleagues who helped us with the organisation of the congress and the publication of this volume. We were almost entirely dependent on the voluntary and non-remunerated help of so many people that it would be impossible to name them all. Two people are representative: Prof. Dr. Briesemeister – without whose efforts this publication would not have been possible – found the necessary funds despite the very precarious financial situation, and Jörg Schulze accepted the huge task of converting all the manuscripts from the various computer programs into a single computer system.

I

Colonial History and Its Traps

Rochefort, Du Tertre et le manuscrit volé - La construction d'une histoire coloniale

Sabine Hofmann (Frankfurt am Main)

En 1654, 27 ans après le début de la colonisation française des Antilles, un livre paraît à Paris: l'*Histoire générale des isles de Saint Christophe, de la Martinique, de la Guadeloupe et autres dans l'Amérique.* Son auteur, le dominicain Jean-Baptiste Du Tertre, a vécu quelques années en Guadeloupe et en Martinique et déclare avoir écrit son texte sur la base d'informations recueillies lors de son séjour aux Antilles.

Dans la préface de cette édition, Du Tertre se plaint d'un vol dont il a été victime quelques années plus tôt: à peine avait-il échappé aux pirates de la mer caraïbe qu'il s'est trouvé aux prises avec ceux du continent européen: on lui a volé son manuscrit.

Et, pire encore, Du Tertre a entendu dire qu'on voulait publier ce manuscrit sous un autre nom que le sien. Pour empêcher qu'un voleur mette son ouvrage sous presse, Du Tertre s'est empressé de le faire imprimer.

En 1658 paraît une autre Histoire[1] des Antilles: l'*Histoire naturelle et morale des Iles Antilles d'Amérique.* Des "directeurs de l'ouvrage", dont les noms ne sont pas mentionnés, exposent la genèse de l'ouvrage. Ils prétendent que le projet de cet ouvrage a été conçu à Paris sept ans plus tôt - c'est-à-dire au début des années 50 - à l'époque précisément où Du Tertre a entendu parler d'une autre histoire contenant de larges extraits de son manuscrit. La concordance des dates indique que ce sont probablement ces directeurs qui ont volé le manuscrit.

Du Tertre n'hésite pas à suggérer la même conclusion: en 1667, une nouvelle version de son texte voit le jour, intitulée cette fois-ci: *Histoire générale des Antilles habitées par les François.* Dans la préface de cette édition, Du Tertre n'accuse pas directement les rédacteurs de l'*Histoire naturelle et morale* du vol, mais il parle dans un même souffle de ce texte, du plagiat commis et de son manuscrit disparu, de sorte que le lecteur ne peut qu'établir un lien entre les rédacteurs de l'*Histoire naturelle et morale* et le manuscrit volé. Qui se cache derrière ces "directeurs de l'ouvrage"?

En feuilletant les catalogues de la Bibliothèque Nationale, de la John Carter Brown-Library ou autres, on trouve différents noms d'auteurs:

[1]Le terme d'histoire, tel qu'il apparaît ici, signifie la description des données géographiques, zoologiques, botaniques aussi bien que la relation des événements.

Charles de Rochefort, ministre protestant à Amsterdam, César de Rochefort, lexicographe, Louis de Poincy, gouverneur général des Antilles. La première édition de l'*Histoire naturelle et morale* n'indique aucun auteur; les "directeurs de l'ouvrage" affirment avoir rédigé le texte sur la base de divers mémoires provenant de témoins oculaires.

Par contre, la deuxième édition française, parue en 1665, n'a qu'un seul auteur: un certain Rochefort, dont le prénom est douteux. On trouve Charles et César; Charles est le prénom cité dans une traduction néerlandaise, datant de 1662, tandis que César est le prénom d'un auteur d'écrits lexicographiques et juridiques auquel certains bibliographes attribuent également l'*Histoire naturelle et morale*; sans doute, parce qu'ils ne connaissent pas l'édition néerlandaise. D'autres traces font entrer De Poincy dans le cercle des auteurs présumés: la préface de certains exemplaires de la première édition porte les lettres L.P.D., dans lesquelles des bibliographes perspicaces[2] reconnaissent les initiales de "Louis de Poincy". Des renseignements sur Saint-Christophe, l'île de De Poincy, abondent dans cette édition, on y trouve même une gravure représentant sa maison.

L'autre indice signalant la collaboration de De Poincy, c'est le glossaire caraïbe-français qui est inséré à la fin du livre. Ce glossaire est un extrait du *Dictionnaire caraïbe-français* de Breton, un missionnaire qui a passé une dizaine d'années dans l'île de la Dominique. Dans la préface de ce dictionnaire, Breton affirme qu'un envoyé de De Poincy est venu lui emprunter son dictionnaire pour en utiliser quelques extraits dans une "Histoire" sur les Antilles. On peut donc conclure que De Poincy a, au moins, contribué au livre en fournissant des renseignements. Mais abandonnons notre investigation et engageons-nous sur une autre voie.

"Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur" demande Michel Foucault dans son essai bien connu. Il ne conçoit plus l'auteur comme un individu situé hors du texte, mais comme une instance qui occupe une place dans une certaine organisation discursive. L'idée même d'un auteur-créateur est, d'après Foucault, une construction discursive qui ne fonctionne que dans certains types de discours. Foucault prend comme exemple le discours de la critique littéraire, pour laquelle l'auteur et sa vie servent d'ancrage à l'interprétation du texte. Dans cette perspective, l'auteur n'est plus antérieur au discours, il est son produit. Il se manifeste dans les préfaces, dans les dédicaces, dans des phrases telles que "je viens de dire que...".

Cette conception nous conduit à lire les textes différemment: le texte n'est plus soumis à une lecture qui tâche d'y relever des renseignements permettant de reconstruire la réalité à laquelle il se réfère. On cherchera plutôt à analyser comment les textes représentent le réel en démontrant

[2]Voir Dampierre 1904.

les strategies discursives qu'ils déploient, les grilles épistémologiques auxquelles ils ont recours, la rhétorique qu'ils emploient - bref, on mettra l'accent sur ce que l'Histoire et les histoires ont de commun: leur caractère textuel et discursif.[3]

Dans le domaine des textes écrits dans une situation coloniale, on assiste, ces dernières années, à la publication d'un grand nombre de recherches mettant à découvert les stratégies visant à légitimer et promouvoir le projet colonial et à avoir prise sur le peuple colonisé.[4]

Je me propose de mettre l'accent sur la construction textuelle de l'auteur, c'est-à-dire que je tâcherai d'analyser comment l'auteur se constitue dans le texte et de décrire le rapport qui lie cette construction de l'auteur au projet colonial.

Je commencerai mon analyse par la première édition de l'*Histoire naturelle et morale* qui date de 1658. Elle contient une dédicace adressée à l'évêque Jacques Amproux et signée de la main de Rochefort. Ce sont, dans cette épître dédicatoire, les Indiens caraïbes qui, tout barbares qu'ils sont, tiennent apparemment à présenter leur hommage à Amproux, ils l'implorent d'accorder un regard à leur histoire et ils espèrent que celle-ci lui plaira. Dans cette epître, Rochefort n'est que leur truchement, leur interprète.

Certes, tout lecteur contemporain devait savoir qu'il ne s'agissait nullement d'une description réaliste de l'attitude des Indiens caraïbes, mais d'une stratégie rhétorique destinée à flatter le destinataire de la dédicace. Pourtant, il s'agit d'une stratégie qui joue sur la mise en scène d'une situation de communication: les Caraïbes sont transformés en auteurs de l'histoire, Rochefort se fait seulement leur porte-parole, leur truchement. Cette même idée d'une pure transmission de la parole d'autrui se retrouve dans la préface, cette fois-ci inscrite dans le discours sur la production du texte. Il y figure un "nous" - ce sont les "directeurs de l'ouvrage" - qui dit avoir rédigé le texte sur la base des mémoires fournis par des témoins oculaires. La crédibilité de ce texte se fonde sur les qualités de ces témoins oculaires. Ce sont des témoins

> [...] desinteressez, dignes de foy, et qui n'ont pas la mémoire moins forte et moins heureuse que leur âme est belle et sincère.[5]

Le travail des directeurs se borne à présenter et à mettre en relation ces mémoires - il n'est pas question d'un seul auteur qui aurait créé l'œuvre. Les choses sont sensiblement différentes pour la deuxième édition où c'est

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[3]Dans ce domaine, voir notamment les travaux de Michel de Certeau, Hayden White et François Hartog.

[4]Pour la Caraïbe, voir surtout Peter Hulme.

[5]Charles Rochefort 1658, épître, sans pagination.

Rochefort qui déclare être l'auteur de l'ouvrage. L'épître dédicatoire a été modifiée: nul Caraïbe pressé de présenter son histoire à un évêque n'apparaît. En revanche, l'édition inclut des lettres adressées à l'auteur Rochefort qui font l'éloge de la fidélité avec laquelle il a décrit la situation aux Antilles. Le destinateur de ces lettres est De Poincy, gouverneur général des Antilles de 1638 à 1644. Rochefort est érigé en auteur, et cette promotion n'est pas dénuée d'utilité: De Poincy fait l'éloge de la juste description des Antilles donnée par Rochefort et garantit, en tant que parfait connaisseur des îles, la fidélité du texte. Rochefort, récemment investi de la qualité d'auteur, loue, de son côté, De Poincy pour les qualités dont il a fait preuve dans ses fonctions de gouverneur. Le bien-fondé de cette louange est évident, puisque les lettres de De Poincy nous présentaient Rochefort comme un auteur fiable. On a donc affaire à un circuit fermé d'affirmations qui ne fonctionne qu'avec un Rochefort auteur. Les constructions de l'auteur dans les deux éditions, si différentes qu'elles soient, poursuivent le même objectif: faire croire que le texte rend fidèlement la réalité.

Du Tertre, lui aussi, considère Rochefort comme l'unique auteur de l'*Histoire naturelle et morale* - comme un auteur et une personne peu dignes d'estime. D'abord, c'est un mauvais auteur: son texte est copié sur celui de Du Tertre, ensuite, selon Du Tertre, tout ce qui n'est pas copié est faux.

Qu'elle soit un plagiat ou bien tout simplement fausse - l'*Histoire naturelle et morale* n'a, d'après Du Tertre, aucun rapport direct avec la réalité. A cela s'ajoute le vol du manuscrit. Rochefort n'est pas seulement un plagiaire, mais il semble qu'il vole même des manuscrits; au vol d'un texte se joint le vol d'un objet concret.

Cette condamnation morale conduit par ailleurs à mettre en question la crédibilité du texte: l'auteur copieur et voleur n'est pas en mesure de garantir la représentation authentique des faits. Du Tertre, dans son Histoire de 1667, se réfère souvent au livre de Rochefort pour en dénoncer les erreurs. Il utilise toujours le nom de celui-ci pour désigner le livre: c'est la personne de Rochefort qui a commis les fautes, qui en est responsable.

Quant au texte de Du Tertre, le rôle de l'auteur est surtout déterminé par la pure représentation des faits sans qu'un sujet témoin s'intercale entre les faits et leur représentation.

Bien que Du Tertre ait assisté à bon nombre d'événements décrits dans son texte, il ne met presque jamais en valeur son statut de témoin oculaire[6]; les incidents dont il a été témoin sont rendus de la même manière que ceux qui lui ont été rapportés par d'autres sources. Le su-

[6]Pour l'effet de crédibilité produit par le témoignage oculaire, voir Hartog 1980 et Affergan 1987.

jet ayant vécu les épisodes, que ce soit Du Tertre ou quelqu'un d'autre, ne figure plus dans le texte, les choses sont représentées sans la mention d'un sujet-témoin. Dans la première version de l'histoire[7] de Du Tertre, le voyage constitue le fil directeur du rapport: Du Tertre décrit son voyage vers les Antilles, ensuite la situation régnant dans les îles et les événements ayant eu lieu lors de son séjour, puis le retour en France. Dans les versions suivantes, le voyage trouve sa place dans le chapitre sur le "flux et reflux de la mer", - l'expérience personnelle n'est plus du tout le principe organisateur du texte, les événements vécus par Du Tertre s'insèrent dans un schéma classificatoire où sont énumérés, décrits et rangés les animaux, les plantes, les données géographiques, les hommes...

L'instance testimoniale qu'est la médiation d'un sujet s'efface, il ne reste plus que le geste de la représentation.

Qu'on ait un auteur-truchement, un auteur fiable, un auteur qui se borne à une pure représentation, l'important est toujours la crédibilité dont cet auteur est le garant ou dont il manque en raison de ses fautes. La construction de l'auteur se produit dans le but de provoquer un effet de crédibilité.

Il y a plusieurs raisons évidentes à cela: les textes rapportent des événements et des situations que le lecteur ne connaît qu'à travers eux. Ils traçent et propagent les portraits des gouverneurs et des intendants et font paraître les activités de ceux-ci sous un jour plus ou moins favorable. Les impressions que les textes donnent et font circuler peuvent avoir des répercussions sur l'attribution des postes et sur le résultat des procès. Ce fut notamment le cas en ce qui concerne De Poincy, le gouverneur général des Antilles. En 1646, l'administration royale l'avait relevé de ses fonctions et avait envoyé un nouveau gouverneur aux Antilles. De Poincy n'a accepté ni la décision royale, ni son successeur. L'appui que celui-ci a trouvé auprès des habitants a provoqué une série de conflits armés.

Dans l'*Histoire naturelle et morale,* la conduite de De Poincy est rapportée d'une manière bienveillante tandis que Du Tertre la critique dans son édition de 1667.

A part la représentation favorable des activités exercées par les protagonistes coloniaux, un autre aspect entre en jeu: la valeur utilitaire de ces textes en vue de la poursuite de la colonisation. Dans les deux textes, on trouve des remarques soulignant que le livre est destiné à renseigner les futurs colons, les actionnaires de la compagnie, les fonctionnaires royaux sur la réalité antillaise: ils indiquent ce qui pousse, ce qu'on peut cultiver, ce qui permet des bénéfices, ce qu'il ne faut pas manger, à quelles espèces de vermine on doit s'attendre, etc. Dans cette perspective, il faut

[7]Il s'agit d'un manuscrit anonyme de la Bibliothèque Nationale, dont l'auteur est sans aucun doute Du Tertre. Cf. Dampierre 1904.

que le texte donne l'impression de rendre les choses telles qu'elles sont, avec véracité. On peut encore noter un troisième aspect: en garantissant l'authenticité de la relation, son accord parfait avec le réel décrit, la construction de l'auteur contribue à valoriser les textes comme vérité historique. C'est la version authentique et, par là, unique. Les autres voix, celles des colonisés, – Indiens massacrés et Africains réduits en esclavage – sont exclues. L'ambition de véracité constitue une tentative de l'emporter sur les textes des écrivains rivaux; mais en prétendant qu'un texte est la seule version de l'histoire, on supprime les autres versions, celles des colonisés. Pour eux ne reste que ce qu'Edouard Glissant appelle une non-histoire. Une histoire qui peut percer dans des histoires au pluriel, dans la littérature.

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Palmares: A Critical View on Its Sources

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Introduction

Every community has historical narratives that are known by virtually everybody. In Brazil the account of the *quilombo*[1] of Palmares is one of such stories. Palmares is already included in the history books for primary school. One of those books, *História do Brasil (Primeiro Grau)*, by Osvaldo R. de Souza, for example, mentions that during the slavery period many slaves escaped from their plantations. They established themselves in places where they were difficult to trace. In those locations, he writes, they formed *quilombos.* The most famous *quilombo* was Palmares, situated in a hilly region of the present federal state of Alagoas. The *chefe* of these runaway-slaves, he continues, was Ganga-Zumba, who after his dead was succeeded by his nephew Zumbi, the *rei* (king) of Palmares. The runaway-slaves organized their own lives in their villages. They were active in agriculture and cattle-breeding and had workshops where clothes, shoes, nets, mats, and pots were made. For over sixty years these people succeeded in resisting their enemies. Eventually the *bandeirante paulista*[2] Domingos Jorge Velho was successful in conquering the *quilombo*, however Zumbi could escape and continued to fight for another two years. Finally he too was killed. His head was cut off and taken to Recife, where it was displayed in the market-place. Zumbi has

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[1]In a Portuguese article of 1987, included in the English translation in his 1992 book, Stuart Schwartz pays much attention to the use of the words *quilombo* and *mucambo* as designations for villages of runaway slaves. At present they mean more or less the same and the word *quilombo* seems to be preferred. Initially only the word mocambo was used in Brazil. Schwartz (1992: 125) writes that the word *quilombo* was used for the first time in 1691 and such in specific connection with Palmares. During the eighteenth century the word was generally adopted.

[2]For the conquering of the interior from the hostile Indians the Portuguese mainly used small private armies, called *bandeiras* after the flags they planted in the conquered land after their victory. The soldiers fighting in those small armies were called *bandeirantes.* The most famous *bandeiras* came from the capitania São Paulo. Usually they were of mixed Portuguese-Indian origin *(mamelucos).* For a comprehensive treatment of the history of these *bandeiras paulistas* I refer to Taunay, who has written down their history in eleven volumes. Volumes seven (1936) and eight (1946) cover, among other things, the role of the Paulistas in the conquest of Palmares.

become the symbol of the slaves' struggle against the white oppression (Souza 1987: 66).

Another primary school book, the one by Paulo Alcantara, also devotes a page to the Palmares Maroons. His book contains approximately the same information as De Souza's. Alcantara adds that the *confederação* Palmares consisted of approximately 20,000 inhabitants, who were living in the same way as in Africa. The name Palmares was taken from the large quantity of palm trees in the region. The Maroons cultivated maize, beans and cassava on their fields, and also Alcantara writes that the *Palmaristas* had cattle: swines and chickens. Ganga-Zumba is not mentioned by Alcantara, but Zumbi is. Alcantara remarks Zumbi's name was derived from the African Zambi, the god of war. Palmares was destroyed by the *bandeirante paulista* Domingos Jorge Velho, who fought the Palmistas for ten years (1687-1697) with an army of 7,000 men. Domingos Jorge Velho did not taste the pleasure of taking the blacks led by Zumbi prisoners, as many threw themselves off the rocks rather than having to return to slavery. Zumbi, who was hit by two bullets, succeeded in escaping but was killed later. His head was displayed in the centre of Olinda (Alcantara sd: 98).

A. Souto Maior's *História do Brasil* is one of the most frequently used history books in secondary school. In a chapter on slave-trade and slavery he also deals with the slave resistance, of which Palmares was a part. Souto Maior writes that a region named Palmares contained many *quilombos,* of which Macaco was famous for its fortifications. Approximately 10,000 people were living there under the leadership of Gangazuma, who received the honorary title of *Zumbi* because he was the most important leader. The title originated from Africa and stood for a divine, immortal ruler. During the Dutch period (1630-1654) there were two expeditions against the Maroons of Palmares. Souto Maior mentions the names of Rodolfo Baro (1644) and João Blaer (1645). From Blaer's diary, he writes, it becomes evident that one of the villages of Palmares consisted of 220 houses with a church and a large *casa de conselho* (meeting hall). In 1675 governor Dom Pedro de Almeida offered the Maroons peace, but this proposal was rejected in Portugal. Souto Maior also mentions a few (unsuccessful) expeditions. He finishes his story with Domingos Jorge Velho's destruction of the Maroon society in 1694. Souto Maior than quotes the cronista Rocha Pita, who wrote on the outcome of this fight that *o chefe negro* Zumbi Gangazuma and his main co-fighters threw themselves off the rocks in a collective suicide as soon as they saw that all was lost. Souto Maior continues to say that this source is not necessarily reliable, as everything took place at night, and there are also sources which report that Zumbi Gangazuma escaped, although he was injured, and continued

to fight for another two years. He was killed and decapitated for treason. His head was displayed in a public place (Souto Maior 1974: 85-88).

In virtually all New World slavery areas communities of runaway slaves were created, at present usually called Maroon societies (e.g. see Price 1973 and Heuman 1986). The majority of Maroon groups we know from history no longer exist, but in a number of countries the descendants of those people are still living in clearly recognizable communities, e.g. in Suriname and on Jamaica. The Maroons of Palmares belong to the category of historic Maroons. In Pernambuco and Alagoas, the federal states where the Maroons of Palmares used to live, it is impossible to define any groups that consider themselves descendants from the Palmaristas. In this article I want to analyse how the story about Palmares has ended up in the official Brazilian history. I will provide this analysis with marginal notes based on the fact that I am reasonably familiar with the historical sources that describe the creation of the Suriname Maroons.

There is a big difference in quantity and quality as far as the sources on the Maroons of Palmares and the Maroons of Suriname are concerned. This difference is connected with the way in which the planters waged war against their runaway slaves. In Brazil almost always *bandeiras* were used for the fight against the Maroons. These *bandeiras* were small armies of mercenaries, consisting of pacified Indians who fought at their own risk. They were not paid in money. Their earnings had to come out of the spoils of war. Goods won could be kept, conquered Maroons were sold and the army commanders shared in the proceeds. If there was a reward, it consisted of *sesmarias* to land, usually land the Maroons had lived on. When an expedition was finished, the Indians took their booty to Recife, where they reported to the governor how their trip had been. The governor then wrote to Portugal that the trip had been a great success, gave the number of people that had been killed and taken prisoner and which part of the booty was for the Crown. He usually finished his letter by mentioning that the Maroons had been heavily defeated. He did not write much more. And in the year that followed he could write approximately the same.

The Dutch in Suriname fought against the Maroons with regular troops. Indians were hardly used. (There are not many Indians in Suriname.) Slaves accompanied the expeditions as bearers. The commander was obliged to hand in a journal of his trip to the government secretariat within a few days after the expedition was finished. These journals, which often consisted of twenty folios, were very detailed. By means of such a journal the course of that expedition can be followed exactly still today. Besides giving an account of the route and the weather, the commanders also stated in their journals where they had contact with the Maroons,

where the fights took place, how the villages were positioned, they counted the number of houses, they gave a description of the weapons, wrote down the crops that were growing on the provision-grounds and how many acres were cultivated. When an expedition succeeded in taking prisoners, they were interrogated. Also those records still exist. From them it is possible to deduct how many people were living in the villages. Often the reports contain entire lists of inhabitants with a note from which plantation they originated. Those military expeditions cost a lot of money, which was collected by levying taxes on the possession of slaves.

If all documents on the Suriname Maroons were to be published, this would result in a book of a few thousand pages, whereas a publication of the sources on the Palmares Maroons would not even come to a hundred. It is not a coincidence that one of the few reports of an expedition against Palmares dates from the time when the north-east of Brazil was a Dutch colony (1630-1654). It seems to be useful to rely on Suriname sources for a view of Palmares.

Part One: Historiography

Palmares according to Barlaeus

For a long time the discourse on Palmares was held with the help of rare books (Barlaeus 1647, Rocha Pita 1730) in which data on these Maroons could be found. In the nineteenth century the interest in archival records arose with the originating of modern historical science. At that time historians started to look whether more could be told about a certain subject than the amount that could be reconstructed from books. As the few record data on Palmares were only included in standard works later than 1850, I will describe these sources only at the moment when they received their places within that historiography.

On 14 February 1630 Dutch troops landed on the beach of Pau Amarelo, a few kilometres away from Olina, the capital of the Portuguese *capitania* Pernambuco.[3] Olinda and its immediate surroundings were captured very fast. In the years that followed the Dutch expanded their territory more and more at the cost of the Portuguese. In 1636 the Dutch controlled the entire area north of Salvador de Bahia.

One year later the *West-Indische Compagnie* (West India Company) appointed the competent count Johan Maurits van Nassau as governor. He remained in the colony until 1644. On his voyage to Brazil Johan Maurits was accompanied by a number of painters (among others Frans

[3]In 1534 the Portuguese king João III divided Brazil into twelve areas, called *capitanias*. The thane/inheritor of such a *capitania* was called the *donatário*.

Post and Albert Eckhout) and scientists (the physician Willem Piso and the physicist Georg Marcgraf). He took the expense for those people upon himself; they were his public relations officers. Post and Eckhout painted the exotic New World, Piso went into the interior, where he studied diseases and Indian ways of healing, whereas Marcgraf collected information of over 1,400 kinds of tropical plants and animals.

Against his wishes Johan Maurits van Nassau was recalled to the Netherlands in 1644 and the angry governor had Caspar van Baerle, professor at the Atheneum Illustre in Amsterdam, write a book (in Latin) on his stay in Brazil. Van Baerle's book about Johan Maurits' period of office was printed in 1647 by Joan Blaeu in Amsterdam, and on that occasion the author latinized his name into Barlaeus. The beautiful book had engravings by S. Savry and J. van Brosterhuizen according to paintings by Post and Eckhout.

Shortly after the publication there was a fire at the printer's, so only a few copies of the book remained. A mutilated translation into German, without the engravings, was published in Cleves in 1660. No Dutch version was available until 1923, a very prestigious publication of only 160 copies, translated and edited by Samuel Honor' Naber, with supplements from the records of the West Indian Company. In 1940 Barlaeus was translated from Latin into Portuguese. Jan Nieuhof copied pieces of Van Baerle in his *Merkweerdige Brasiliaense Zee en Land Reize* (Remarkable Brazilian sea and land travels) (1682).

In 1675 the *Nova Lusitania. História da Guerra Brasílica* by Francisco de Brito Freyre was published in Lisbon, which dealt with the history of Brazil until 1638. What De Brito Freyre wrote about Palmares, he had taken from Barlaeus.[4] Also Varnhage used Barlaeus, as a source for his *História do Brasil* (1845). In the nineteenth century copies of Barlaeus were available in Pernambuco. The physician Joaquim d'Aquino Fonseca and Fernandez Gama both possessed a copy in 1841.

About Palmares, Barlaeus narrated that a certain Bartolomeus Lints lived in 'Palmeiras' for some time. Whether the other things he wrote about Palmares originated from this Lints is not mentioned by the author. In those days, wrote Barlaeus, so it must have been about 1643, there were also discussions on disturbing the fortifications in the Palmeiras 'where a mixed lot of robbers and fugitive slaves was united in thieving

[4]Francisco de Brito Freyre was born in Coruche (Alentejo, Portugal) around 1625. After 1641 he followed a military career with the navy in Pernambuco. From 1661-1664 De Brito Freyre was governor of Pernambuco. He died in Lisbon in 1692 (Mello Neto 1975). The book deals in particular with the history of Pernambuco in the period from 1627 up to and including 1638.

and robbing'. Barlaeus continued that there was a greater and a little Palmeiras.

Greater Palmeiras was situated 30 miles from St. Amaro, at the foot of Boho mountain. The 5,000 blacks lived in scattered houses, which they built at the entrances to the forests. They had an exit to flee and to reach their hiding-places if danger threatened. Careful and suspicious, they sent out spies to look out for enemies in the neighbourhood. During the day they went hunting, and when evening fell, the home-comers did not worry about the absentees. After they had put out sentries they continued to dance until midnight and they stamped the ground with such a lot of force that it could be heard from far away. The rest of the night they slept until nine or ten o'clock.

The number of inhabitants of Little Palmares amounted to some thousands. The people lived in simple huts, made from twigs and grass. Behind the villages their provision-grounds were situated. There they grew coconuts, beans, potatoes, cassava, maize, sugar cane. The maize was planted and harvested twice a year. The Maroons got their fish from the rivers and went hunting. They did not keep any cattle.

After the harvest the inhabitants celebrated for a fortnight. 'They imitate the Portuguese religion and form of government,' writes Barlaeus: 'in the religion priests lead, in the form of government they have judges.' It is not entirely clear what exactly he meant by this cryptic description. For what concerns religion, he does not say that the inhabitants of Palmeiras were Catholic, but obviously they were familiar with priests. The inhabitants of Palmeiras themselves also knew slavery: someone who was robbed from a plantation, was the slave of his robber. Such a person could become free himself again by robbing another slave. Everybody who fled to Palmares by himself, was a free person there (Baerle 1923: 315-316).

A patrol which had been postponed earlier, was sent to (Greater) Palmeiras in January 1644. 'The bold and daring Roelof Baro has destroyed Greater Palmeiras completely together with his troops and a hundred Tapoei people... The robbers defended themselves behind a double fence which contained a thousand families besides the dwellings of the singles' (Baerle 1923: 369). A hundred Palmeiristas were killed in this action, while 31 were taken prisoner, seven of whom were Brazilians (= Indians) and some were under-aged mulattos. The villages were surrounded by sugarcane fields. There were a lot of chickens, but no other animals (Baerle 1923: 370).[5] Four of the Tapoei people who travelled together

[5]Baro's journal has not survived, only his communication to Johan Maurits (The Hague, Algemeen Rijksarchief, Archief van Oude West-Indische Com-

with Baro to Palmeiras were later allowed to go to the Netherlands with Johan Maurits van Nassau (Baerle 1923: 370).

Palmares according to De Rocha Pita

Souto Maior quoted in his history book for secondary school the eighteenth century author Sebastião de Rocha Pita. De Rocha Pita was born in Salvador de Bahia on 3 May 1660. He died in Portugal on 2 November 1738. In 1730 he published in Lisbon a *História da America Portugueza.* In this *historia* Rocha Pita devotes eleven pages to Palmares (pages 323-333 of the re-publication of 1878). De Rocha Pita referred to Barlaeus and copied heavily from him.

The author places the origin of Palmares at the invasion of the Dutch in Pernambuco in 1630. Many slaves took advantage of the invasion and the chaos that ensued and fled. Initially it was especially men who went into the jungle. As they could not live without women, they decided to rob them from the plantations. De Rocha Pita uses the allegory of the abduction of the Sabine Virgins (1878: 325). The regime of the Palmares chieftains was a tight one. Murder and robbery were punished by the death penalty. The inhabitants of Palmares were Christians -he writes- but they did not know the correct doctrine, actually they only used the cross, and mixed Catholicism with all kinds of habits and images from Africa. As no Catholic priests were living in their midst, they were unable to receive the sacraments (1878: 326). Due to a lack of textile the people went virtually naked. Although the inhabitants of Palmares caused the colony a lot of trouble because of their marauding expeditions, there were also many inhabitants who cooperated with them if it was to their advantage.

About the Palmares form of government De Rocha Pita reports that the blacks of Palmares selected their 'chefe' from people who had a lot of experience. The inhabitants of the villages revered their chieftain with religious obedience. They gave him the title of *Zumbi,* a title which meant diabo (devil) in the language of Angola. There were also other magistrates in Palmares for the administration of justice and the waging of wars.

The most important part of the story by De Rocha Pita is conquering the fort of Zombî. His place of residence was fenced by a double row of high posts. The little town, which had approximately 20,000 inhabitants, had three gates with platforms, each guarded by a garrison led by a capitão. De Rocha Pita elaborates in a comprehensive fashion on the

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pagniën (records code 1.05.01.01), *Daily Minutes* of 2 February 1644; Letter XIX of 5 April 1644).

heroic deeds of Domingos Jorge Velho at the seizure of the village. During that seizure 800 inhabitants were killed or taken prisoner. From De Rocha Pita also originates the story that king Zombî threw himself off the rocks in order to avoid being captured (1878: 329-333).[6]

In 1810, 1817 and 1819 the Englishman Robert Southey published a three-volume standard work on the history of Brazil. Southey (1774-1843), poet and historian, was the friend of other authors on Brazil (Thomas Lindley, John Mawe, James Henderson, John Luccock, Henry Koster). He had a library consisting of 14,000 books, among which many on Portugal, Spain and Brazil could be found. His *History of Brasil* was written between 1806 and 1819. In 1862 the first translation in Portuguese was published. On the whole Southey copied the Palmares episodes from De Rocha Pita (1730). For instance, his book also contains Barlaeus' story that in Palmares maize was harvested twice a year, and that the inhabitants preferred to dance until midnight (Southey 1977: I, 361). Also reports on their religion and form of government were derived from De Rocha Pita. The same can be said for the story about the seizure of Zumbi's village in 1694 and his heroic death.

The Pernambucoan historian José Bernardo Fernandes Gama extensively described the *Quilombo dos Palmares* in the fourth part of his *Memórias Históricas da Província de Pernambuco* (1844: 28-43). Also Fernandes Gama took his material from de Rocha Pita. He also let Palmares originate at the invasion by the Dutch in 1630. The first few years the slaves who had fled led a rather peaceful existence. They collected fruit from the jungle, hunted wild animals and cultivated cassava, beans, rice and maize. Within a few years the Palmares population had grown up to some 20,000 inhabitants. Just like De Rocha Pita, Fernandes Gama reports the abduction of female slaves and the syncretistic faith of the Maroons. Fernandes Gama also quotes De Rocha Pita about their form of government: the Maroons had a chosen monarchy, whereby the king had the title of 'Zomby'. In Maroon society robbery, theft and adultery were punished with the death penalty. The Palmares laws did not exist in a written form, but were handed down from father to son.

Just like De Rocha Pita, also Fernandes Gama gives a comprehensive description of Domingos Jorge Velho's fight against the Maroons. In the paragraphs that deal with the subject, new material is also used. Gama had found some documents which provided an insight in the rewards that had been promised to Domingos Jorge Velho if he were able to destroy Palmares. The story about the seizure of Palmares again originates in its

[6]Later it would become known from other sources that when Zumbi's village, Macaco, was captured, many could flee in the night, but that in that flight full of confusion many lost their step and fell to death down the precipice.

entirety from De Rocha Pita, but in some places it is exaggerated. For instance, Zumbi's suicide inspires the author to add: 'o mais brilhante exemplo de heroismo'.

Palmares according to the Relação

In 1859 the magazine *Revista Trimensal* of the Instituto Histórico Geográfico e Etnológico do Brasil published an anonymous manuscript (probably written by an inhabitant of Serinhám) based on a record found in the Torre de Tombo archives in Lisbon by Menezes de Drummond. The document *Relação das guerras feitas aos Palmares de Pernambuco no tempo do Governador D. Pedro de Almeida de 1675 a 1678* deals with the fight against Palmares in the period 1675-1678, as the title already indicates. It is an important chronicle in which lots of names of persons and places are given. In 1988 it was reprinted in Leonardo Dantas Silva (Org.), *Alguns Documentos para a História da Escravidão.* In my references I will make use of the 1988 edition.

In February 1674 Dom Pedro de Almeida became the new governor of Pernambuco. After his arrival the fight against the Maroons grew more fierce. If the Maroons would accept the authority of the Portuguese, would behave themselves as faithful vassals of the king and his governor, would be content with peripheral grounds and would behave with humility, just like the christened Indians and poor whites, then there would hardly be any objection to their individual existence. However, as a political, social and military unit Palmares had to be destroyed.[7]

The problem was that De Almeida did not have any soldiers. The troops of the governor of Pernambuco consisted in that period of some 400 soldiers, too few to conquer Palmares (Carneiro 1947: 117). Therefore support for the *conquista* had to be sought from the *bandeiras.* There was also hardly any money in Pernambuco. Due to the wars against the Dutch the *capitania* had become flat broke.

The following can be reconstructed from the *Relação.* First of all it describes the results of an expedition led by Manoel Lopes (Galvão) in November 1675. After 25 days the patrol discovered a large *cidade* consisting of more than 2,000 houses, completely walled by palings. After a fight of two and a half hours the soldiers conquered the village and took some 70 inhabitants prisoner. The next day new fights erupted when the Palmaristas tried to recapture the village. Their attack was fended off.

[7]Thomas Flory (1979: 116-130) arrived at a similar conclusion. He has suggested that a desire for the lands cleared and developed by mocambo fugitives was also a major impulse for colonial society's attack upon them.

The refugees found a new place of residence at some 25 *léguas*[8] from the destroyed village. Manoel Lopes also drove them away from that place, during which fight the 'army leader, named Zambi, which means God of war'[9] was injured by a bullet in his leg (*Relação* 1988: 33).

In order to complete the Palmares conquista, Dom Pedro de Almeida tried to get into contact with the *bandeirante* Fernão Carrilho. On 21 September 1677 Carrilho left with only 185 soldiers, whites, *mestizos* and Indians. He told his soldiers that they were small in numbers, but that if their expedition was to be successful, they would receive land to cultivate and slaves to serve them. After two weeks the patrol came across the reinforced *mucambo* of A Qualtune, place of residence of the 'Mother of the King' (*Relação* 1988: 36). The sneak attack on their village took the inhabitants completely by surprise. Many were killed and nine or ten Maroons were taken prisoner. However, most of them were successful in escaping, like A Qualtune. From the prisoners Fernão Carrilho learned that king Gangazumba and his brother Gana Jona[10] and most of the other *potentados* stayed in the *Cerca Real*[11] Subupira. When Carrilho arrived there a bit later he found Subupira totally burned out. The inhabitants had left without leaving anything of value (*Relação* 1988: 37). Some time later a patrol discovered a road which led to a large *mucambo*. A large number of Maroons were killed in a bloody fight, including a captain, Caspar, and João Papuya Ambrósio.[12] In addition 56 prisoners were taken, the most important one of which was *capitão* Ganga Muissa, the leader of the *gente de Angola* (the people from Angola) (*Relação* 1988: 38). This last mention makes transparent that some sort of classification existed within the group based on ethnic background. Other troops conquered the *mucambo* of Amaro, a small town of 1,000 houses. In this village two children and approximately twenty cousins and nephews of Gangazumba were taken prisoner. Toculo, a son of the king, turned out to have been killed during the attack. In January 1678 Carrilho returned with a lot of prisoners, like a real victor.

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[8] One *légua* is circa 4,800 metres.

[9] 'General das Armas, que se chamava o Zambi, que quer dizer Deus da Guerra.'

[10] 'Gana Jona' might be a typing error, as the brother is usually called 'Gana Zona'. According to Nina Rodrigues (1932: 92) this is not a proper name, but a title. *Gana* or *Ganga* are corruptions of the African *ngana,* which means Lord. According to the same writer 'Zona' is a corruption of the Lunda word *mona,* which means brother. 'Gana Zona' would then mean Lord Brother, brother of the king.

[11] *Cerca Real* (royal fence). A walled village was called *cerca* in Brazil.

[12] The addition Papuya makes clear that Indians were living with the Palmistas.

In the opinion of D. Pedro de Almeida the Palmistas had been beaten. The governor therefore offered them peace. Two of the prisoners were sent to Gangazumba. A little while later a delegation from Palmares arrived in Recife. Their arrival caused an enormous uproar in the town. The Maroons carried their bow and arrows and some of them had guns. 'Virtually naked, their genitals covered with cloths and skins, they went into the town, headed by Gangazumba's eldest son, who was seated on a horse and who had been injured in the war' (*Relação* 1988: 42).

The Palmistas were received by the governor in public audience. Sitting at his feet with dignity, they beat themselves with palm branches until they were bleeding, as a sign of submission. They applied for peace with the whites and freedom for all who were born in Palmares, and they promised that all slaves who would flee to them would be handed over. A compromise was reached. The Palmistas would leave the region of Palmares and establish themselves as faithful subjects of the Portuguese throne in a region to be allotted to them. 'That way a fight which had lasted for years came to an end, thanks to statesmanship of Dom Pedro de Almeida, a governor who cannot be praised enough' (*Relação* 1988: 42-44).

On the basis of entries in the Relação the following list of *mucambos* in Palmares can be compiled:

1. Zumbi's *mucambo*, at sixteen *léguas* north-west of Porto Calvo.
2. The village of Acotirene, five *léguas* more to the north.
3. The villages of Tabocas, situated not far to the east of the villages of Zumbi and Acotirene.
4. The *mucambo* Dambrabanga, situated fourteen *léguas* north-west of the villages of Tabocas.
5. The walled *quilombo* of Subupira was another eight *léguas* more to the north.
6. Macaco, the *cerca real,* was situated six *léguas* north of Subupira. Considering Macaco's position in the Serra da Barriga Macaco it must be the newly rebuilt Greater Palmares of Barlaeus. Macaco was located on the land of the present *município* União dos Palmares in Alagoas.
7. The *mucambo* of Osenga, situated at five *léguas* north-west of Serinhám.
8. The walled village of Amaro, situated at nine *léguas* north-west of Serinhám.

9. The village called Andalaquituche, the *mucambo* of Kafuxe, Zumbi's brother.[13]
10. The village of Ma Aqualtune, the mother of the king, situated at 30 *léguas* from Porto Calvo.

Additions from archival records

After 1860 it was possible to reconstruct the following about the Maroons. Already at the time of the Dutch (Van Baerle) there were some 6,000 runaway slaves in the hilly region behind the sugar plantations of Pernambuco. Later those settlements grew to about 20,000 inhabitants. At the time of governor De Almeida those Maroons were beaten *(Relação)*, however not definitely, because in 1695 (Fernandes Gama) they were attacked once more. In that fight the *bandeirante paulista* Domingos Jorge Velho played a large role. On that occasion the leader of the Maroons, who bore the title of Zumbi, threw himself off the rocks together with his main co-warriors (De Rocha Pita).

A record published in 1875 by Dias J.F. Cabral in the *Revista do Instituto Arqueológico e Geográfico Alagoana,* titled *Narração de Alguns Sucessos Relativos à Guerra dos Palmares, de 1668 a 1680,* the origin of which is quite obscure, adds mainly details to the *Relação.* As the *Narração* deals with virtually the same period as the *Relação*, the picture of Palmares is not really adjusted.

In the standard work *O Brasil e as Colónias Portuguezas* by Joaquim Pedro de Oliveira Martins, published in 1876, Palmares is mentioned. Martins refers thereby to Barlaeus, Rocha Pita and the *Relação.*

In 1884 Pedro Paulino da Fonseca published two articles on Palmares.[14] The first article is not more than an elaboration of the *Relação* and did not add much to the knowledge about Palmares. The second article was more important. Although mainly the reproduction of a record, without much explanation, it still makes clear that the Palmares Maroons had not been finally beaten in De Almeida's time. The article shows (something which had already been known from Fernandes Gama 1844) that some fifteen years later, in 1693, negotiations about the fight against Palmares

[13]Brandão (1935: 67) is of the opinion that Andalaquituche is a corruption of Zala-Quituche (or Zala-Cafuche). Zala comes from Kibunda and means in that language: place of residence. Zala-Kituxe or Zala-Kafuxe therefore means the village of Kituxe or Kafuxe. The mountain range in this region is still called: Serra do Cafuchi.

[14]Both articles were reprinted in Dantas Silva 1988.

with another *bandeirante,* Domingos Jorge Velho, were held and that the final destruction of Palmares took place in 1694.[15]

A very important chronicler of Pernambuco was the Nineteenth-century archivist F.A. Pereira de Costa, born in Recife in 1851. From a compilation of records and parts of books he created a chronicle of Pernambuco, the *Anais Pernambucos,* which consisted of almost six thousand pages. It was published between 1951 and 1956.[16] Almost every of the ten volumes contains information on Palmares, but the author does not make it easy for the reader. Indications as regards the sources of the stories are rare and information is frequently repeated. As collecting took place at random and in an uncritical fashion, the *Anais Pernambucanos* often contradicts itself. In 1882 Costa published a 'who-was-who' of Pernambuco. This also contains paragraphs devoted to famous warriors against Palmares, such as Domingos Jorge Velho.

Pereira de Costa belonged to a group of scientists who united themselves in the *Instituto Arqueológico, Histórico e Geográfico Pernambucano.* This group sent researchers to the Netherlands in order to search for information on Pernambuco concerning the period when the northeast of Brazil was Dutch, in the records of the West Indian Company. A very important part of those records was copied.[17] A number of those reports were translated and published.[18]

As far as Palmares is concerned, a record was found about an expedition by captain Johan Blaer against Palmares in 1645.[19] This piece was

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[15]It should be made quite clear that even in 1694, Palmares did not end. The year can be regarded as the finish of Palmares as 'state within a state', as Maroons lived in the region even after 1694.

[16]Pereira de Costa probably gave this manuscript, on which he worked for almost fifty years, to many people for perusal. Parts of it were published as articles in the *Revista do Instituto Arqueológico, Histórico e Geográfico Pernambucano.* Pereira de Costa died in 1924. In 1937 his manuscript was handed over by his son Carlos to Olympio Costa Júnior (1901-1987), head of the Bibliotheca Pública do Estado. The *Anais Pernambucanos* consist of ten volumes. The publication was edited by Jordão Emerenciano. A reprint appeared between 1983 and 1987. On that occasion an eleventh volume was added, a comprehensive index.

[17]In 1886 Dr. José Hygino Duarte Pereira travelled to the Netherlands for a transcript of the main documents from the 'Brazil' records of the West Indian Company. The transcripts were later kept in the Archaeological Institute of Recife (Wätjen 1921: 3).

[18]E.g. in 1887: 'Breve discurso sobre o estado das quatro Capitanias conquistados de Pernambuco, Itamaracá, Paraíba e Rio Grande.' *Revista do Instituto Arqueológico, Histórico e Geográfico Pernambucano* 34: 139-196; and in 1901 'Descrição das capatanias de Pernambuco, Itamaracá, Paraíba e Rio Grande.' *Revista do Instituto Arqueológico, Histórico e Geográfico Pernambucano* 55: 215-227 (Adriaen Verdonck).

[19]The original can now be found in the Algemeen Rijksarchief in The Hague, Archief van Oude West-Indische Compagniën (records code 1.05.01.01), Inven-

translated by Alfredo de Carvalho and published in 1902. A considerably better translation appeared in 1988. It was made by J.A. Gonsalves de Mello Neto, who is nowadays in Brazil the greatest expert on the *dominio holandês*.

Roelof Baro's expedition mentioned by Barlaeus had not weakened Palmeiras' power one little bit. Therefore governor Hendrik Hous, the successor of Johan Maurits, decided in favour of a new bush patrol against Palmares in 1645, this time under the command of Johan Blaer. The patrol went into the jungle on 26 February. After a few days Blaer became ill, after which he had to be taken back to Alagoas.[20] The others continued their trip led by Jürgens Reijmbach. On 18 March they came across an 'old' Palmares, left behind by the inhabitants three years earlier, because living there was unhealthy.[21]

The next day they continued their search for the 'other' Palmares, which had been destroyed one year earlier by Roelof Baro and his Tapuya Indians. It was found towards the evening of the twentieth. The next morning it was stormed. Two of the trumpeters, who were probably leading the way, fell into a pitfall with sharp points. The village was easy to seize as the Maroons were absent, they had been working on their provision-grounds for six days already. A few people were taken prisoner, some others were beaten to death during the pursuit. The village consisted of 220 houses, a church and a meeting hall. It does not become obvious from the description that the entire village was encircled by palings, there were, however, reinforced entrance gates. The village, which was half a mile long, had broad, straight paths which were one fathom (1,83) wide. The Maroons had all kinds of craftsmen in their midst. Their king administered justice severely and did not tolerate any *toovenaers* (witches) near him. Whenever inhabitants tried to run away, they were beaten to death if captured.

Towards the end of the journal the usefulness of palm trees to the inhabitants of Palmares is elaborated on. First of all palm leaves were used to make the roofs of the houses, they also made their hammocks out of them. The palm heart was eaten, the juice from the nuts was drunk while from the fruit also palm oil was made. The tree also supplied salt. From cut trees worms were taken which were then eaten.

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tory number 60, with the *Letters Received from Brazil* of 2 April 1645: 'Journale van de Voyagie die Capt. Johan blaer gedaen heeft naer de Palmares', Ao 1645.

[20]In the same year 1645 a Brazilian army led by André Vidal de Negreiros took Blaer captive near Recife. Some time later they killed him, together with Indians who were living with him (Carneiro 1947: 79-80).

[21]Brandão (1935: 64) positions the 'old' Palmares in the neighbourhood of Viçosa (in Alagoas) near the *engenhos* Bananal, Floreste and Matta Limpa.

Here it will be interesting to have a look into the archives that describe the Surinamese Maroons. Also in Suriname the roofs of the Maroons houses were covered with leaves from the pina-palm (Euterpe Oleracea Mart.) or the tas-palm (Thrynax Perviflora). The Maroons used to sleep in hammocks woven of fibres drawn from the Mauritius-palm (Mauretia Flexuosa L.). Many palms have a core which resembles a large belt of rough and fairly strong yarn. If, in the case of the Mauritius-palm, this belt is immediately cooked, it will maintain its bright white colour. It can be made flexible by firstly crushing it. In 1758, linen made from the Mauritius-palm was found in the village of Maroon chief Kormantin Kodjo. In the Suriname forests, the Maroons would mainly look for *kumbu,* a palm fruit, and *kabbes,* the palm heart. Kabbes is mostly understood to be the core of the maripa-palm (Attalea Maripa Palmae). When cutting off the top of the tree about half a meter under the place where the leaves start to bud and taking away the outer bark, one will find the leaves which have not yet sprouted and are folded together like a fan.

In Suriname the Maroons ate also palm worms called *grugru.* These cabbage worms had the size of a man's thumb. They were fried and eaten with butter or grilled on a fire like a kebab (Stedman 1988: 338). *Grugru* were also used for the production of butter. They contained so much fat that, once they were fried, they produced the so-called palm-butter. The fat was salted and stored in bottles. These palm-worms were more or less bred by the Maroons. They cut down Mauritius-palms for this purpose, in which they carved notches through to the core (Van Coll 1903: 536). Palm weevils would lay eggs in this core, which produced edible larvas after some six weeks.

The maripa-palm (Attalea Maripa Palmae) was probably the salt-supplier. The Suriname archives repeatedly make mention of the Maroons obtaining salt from burning tree-trunks, which they did as follows: a large amount of dry and firm firewood was collected and piled up. Palm-trees were cut in pieces and put on top of it; the amount commensurate with the desired amount of salt. A fire was made and maintained until all palm branches had turned into ashes. These ashes were left to cool down for two days and then gathered in baskets. After that, pure water was washed through the ashes two or three times. This water was then carefully collected, boiled and eventually evaporated and what was left, was salt (Hoogbergen 1990: 19- 20).

On the basis of the route description in the journal Brandão concluded that the village destroyed by Reijmbach and his men must have been situated in Alagoas, between the present day places Viçosa and União dos Palmaros (Brandão 1935: 62-4). In 1675 the village of Zumbi, the *cerca real do Macaco,* was supposed to have been situated in the same

place. After the departure of the attackers the *quilombo* had therefore been rebuilt.

Information on Palmares can also be found in the manuscript by the Benedict monk Dom Domingos de Loreto Couto, published in 1904 but dating from 1757. Couto was born in Recife at the end of the seventeenth century. In 1762 he was probably 66 years old, a monk belonging to the *Ordem de São Bento* and living in Recife (Mello Neto 1986: 196). Couto's sources are books of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, besides manuscripts and documents from the Recife archives. Couto also declares that he received information from old people.[22] In Loreto Couto's work Gana-Zona is also mentioned as a brother of Ganga-Zumba. From his book it is possible to infer that the agreement between the governor and the representatives of Ganga-Zumba was not accepted by the majority of the Palmares commanders. Loreto Couto mentions that Gana-Zona helped the Portuguese in the war against the Maroons of Palmares.[23] So it becomes clear that part of the Maroons made peace around 1678 and abided by it, whereas another part kept on fighting.

Around the turn of the century the group of scientists in Recife also included Nina Rodrigues, who worked at the University of Pernambuco. He had probably frequent contact with Pereira da Costa. On the basis of everything that had been written on Palmares Nina Rodrigues published in 1904 a general article on Palmares, which bore the interesting title *A Tróia negra. Erros e Lacunas da História de Palmares.*[24] After briefly describing the sources until that moment, he starts a discussion with De Rocha Pita, who wrote about Palmares that it was *uma república rústica, bem ordinada,* with a chosen leader: Zâmbi (spelling by Rodrigues). Rodrigues notes that one should not think of our republics in that respect, but of the African habit to choose the person who was best suited as 'jefe' (Rodrigues 1988: 19). Also the statements by De Rocha Pita about the size of the villages, the type of building and fortifications are qualified by Rodrigues. In his opinion it concerned simple villages, which just like in Africa were dotting the landscape.

On the basis of various large general accounts on Brazilian history which were published in the second part of last century and the 1884 article by Fonseca, Nina Rodrigues reconstructed the period 1678-1697. He made it clear that various expeditions were sent to Palmares later

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[22]'Esta História estribado em verídicas informações de pessoas de 80, 90 e 100 anos' (note 31 Desagravos I, p.7).

[23]Gana-Zona was made a free man in 1678 and on that occasion he received the name of Don Pedro de Sousa Castro Ganazona. He died in 1681 (Costa 1951: V, 229).

[24]The expression 'Troia Negra' Rodrigues took from Oliveira Martins (1876: 64).

than 1678. In 1678 the Maroons had not been beaten yet. Their struggle lasted at least until 1694, when Zumbi's village, Macaco, was conquered.

Records published at the beginning of this century, further colour the story about Palmares with all kinds of details. The main information came from records of the baron of Studart (published in 1906, 1910-1913 and 1921) and from the correspondence of Diogo Botelho, governor of Brazil from 1602-1608, which was published in 1911. These last documents made it clear that the Palmares settlements dated back a long time before the Dutch arrived. Indeed, in a letter of 20 February 1601 Diogo Botelho refers to Palmares. He then wrote that he was planning to deal with 'os negros dos Palmares'. A year later the governor sent a patrol to the Maroons under the command of Bartolomau Bezerra. From Botelho's correspondence it becomes transparent that more expeditions were sent to the Maroons of Palmares during his governorship, but no data can be found on the outcome (Corespondência de Diogo Botelho 1911: 192 and 218).

A very important book on Palmares, mainly based on the above-mentioned literature, but with interesting new sources, found in the records of Alagoas was published by Alfredo Brandão in 1914. According to his writings Macaco, Zumbi's village, existed as a village until 1831, after which it was named Vila Nova da Imperatriz and subsequently, with a wink at history, União dos Palmares in the present federal state of Alagoas.

In 1918 a small article about Palmares was published in English in the Journal of Negro History (Chapman 1918: 29-32). Chapman mainly limits himself to a representation of the historically known facts. The latter cannot be said of the article by Manuel Arao, published in 1922. For a large part nothing new is happening and Arao keeps to the description by Blaer, Rocha Pita and the Relação. When we look at the data that concern Palmares, it seems that around 1920 a lot was known about people who fought against the Maroons, but that there was very little anthropological knowledge on the group itself. Unfortunately this does not stop many speculating about the Maroon culture, by interpreting those sources very carelessly. Manuel Arao has Blaer say things which he did not describe, he quotes wrongly from Barlaeus and uncritically takes over all kinds of reports by De Rocha Pita. Arão was not the first one of a series of speculative scientists. De Rocha Pita had preceded him two centuries earlier. Nor would he be the last one.

In the course of the 20th century Palmares became more than a historic event. The fact that slaves did not remain helplessly on the plantations, but instead fled and built up alternative communities in the jungle is a politically and ideologically important and useful observation. Life in Palmares can be credited with all kinds of properties that first of all are

important for the political struggle in the present. Palmares can be called a republic, a black republic, a socialist republic, a democratic republic, anything according to the writer's interpretation.

On the basis of records from 1696 Dr. Mario Behring proved in 1930 that the statement by De Rocha Pita that Zumbi had thrown himself off the rocks when his village, Macaco, was seized, could not be true, as Zumbi had lived for approximately two more years afterwards. On 13 March 1696 the governor of Pernambuco wrote to Lisbon that Zumbi had been killed. A mulatto who had been taken prisoner by the inhabitants of São Françisco, knew his abode and, in exchange for his life, he had taken the paulistas to the mucambo of Zumbi. There were only about twenty Maroons in this village and they formed no match for the attackers. Zumbi was killed and decapitated afterwards (Behring 1930: 150).[25]

Overall Studies

In 1938 a comprehensive study on Palmares was published by Ernesto Ennes, record keeper of the Arquivo Histórico Colonial in Lisbon. In this work Ennes published 95 documents which he had found in his records on Palmares. An extensive introduction of 130 pages combined the old data with the new sources. After Ennes' book not many new information has emerged. The books and articles on Palmares which were published afterwards are all adaptations of the material known around 1940. The most well-known of those works are Carneiro (1947), de Freitas (1954), Moura (1959), Kent (1965), Freitas (1973), Schwartz (1987) and Alves Filho (1988).

When we look back at what became available as new information in connection with Palmares during the period 1900-1940, it appears that first of all it was established that Palmares already existed during the pre-Dutch period. Second, all kinds of record data became available which made it clear that also in the period starting in 1654 (when the Dutch left) and finishing in 1675 (the expeditions under governor De Almeide) patrols were sent regularly to Palmares. It also emerged that the fight against Palmares had continued after 1678. The death of Zumbi reported by De Rocha Pita should not be dated in 1678 but eighteen years later.

After Macaco was captured in 1694 Indian villages were established in the Palmares region. In 1698 António Vieira de Melo, son of Bernardo Vieira, commander of the troops that conquered Macaco in 1694, started

[25]In September 1906 Behring also published Zumbi's death in the Kosmo magazine. I have not been able to recover the article in question. It may be that it contained the same material as the article of 1930.

to colonize the Palmares region. He established a fazenda in Jupi, built houses for his workers and a chapel dedicated to Nossa Senhora do Ros rio. Several times the fazenda was attacked by Maroons, but they were beaten back after which they left Jupi in peace.

In October 1700 the Maroons seemed to have recovered themselves to such an extent that the governor received permission from the king to hold a new expedition in order 'to completely destroy Palmares'.[26] The Maroons were known to be led by Camuanga, a brother of Zumbi (Costa 1951: IV, 487 and 509). The expedition destroyed various *mucambos,* took 100 Maroons prisoner, including the eldest son of Camuanga. This was the last expedition against Palmares. In view of the relatively little number of people that were killed and taken prisoner in the preceding years, it can be assumed that the survivors had mixed with the free coloured population living in the region. In the nineteenth century descendants were still living in the village of Reino Encantado (Perreira de Costa 1951).

Part Two: Discussion

Demography

How many inhabitants did Palmares have? Van Baerle estimated their number at 6,000 (5,000 in Greater and 1,000 in Little Palmares). Blaer's journal estimates the same numbers. The Relação mentions many villages, but tells us little about the number of their inhabitants. A number of some 10,000 inhabitants for all those villages seems an estimate which is sooner too high than too low. De Rocha Pita and Brito Freyre give a number of 30,000, a figure taken by most authors. According to Schwartz (1992: 123) there were only about 200 engenhos in Pernambuco in the 17th century, each having approximately 100 slaves. According to him there were only about 20,000 slaves, so a number of 30,000 runaway slaves seems an exaggerated estimate.

I think that more slaves were living in Pernambuco, but one and the other does not influence the proposition that 30,000 runaway slaves is highly exaggerated. Let us count. Father Fernão Cardim who was in Pernambuco in 1584, wrote that there were 66 *engenhos* in this *capitania* in that year, on which an average of 50 slaves were working (Cardim 1939: 290). This means that there was a total of some 3,300 slaves in Pernambuco. Gabriel Soares de Souza (1938: 29) gives for the same year a number of four to five thousand black slaves, whereas a Jesuit father

[26]Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Pernambuco, Códice 257, f 53 v. (Acioli 1988: 25).

mentions a number of ten thousand black and two thousand red slaves (Calmon 1959: II,347) one year later. Further data are not available.

In the period between 1600 and 1630 an annual average of 4,000 slaves was supplied (Ennes 1938: 17). At an estimate annual decrease of 6% this supply meant a growth up to more than 50,000 slaves in 1630. As a result of the Portuguese-Dutch war no slaves were imported between 1630 and 1635, which meant that the slave population dropped from about 55,000 in 1630 to 40,000 in 1635. In the period 1635-45 the Dutch took 23,163 slaves to Brazil (Wätjen 1913: 431), so that in 1645 the slave population can be estimated at approximately 40,000.

As a consequence of the revolt of the Portuguese planters and the new hostilities again no slaves were imported between 1646 and 1654. We do not know anything about slave imports after 1654. It will not have been a lot, as the literature generally mentions that Pernambuco never recovered from the wars against the Dutch. The region only got another chance as sugar producer after Haïti withdrew from the world market at the beginning of the 19th century.

The political organization

The only thing Barlaeus writes about the political organization of Palmares is that they had copied their way of government from the Portuguese. In his book names of Maroon leaders are mentioned: Sebastião do Souto and Camarãs. Blaer speaks of a king and a hall of meetings, but does not tell us any more about the political structure. De Rocha Pita speaks about a republic with a chosen head of state, bearing the title of Zûmbi, assisted by magistrates in connection with justice and waging war. It is, however, not clear where he got his material from.

The Relação says about the leadership of the Maroons of Palmares that the king had palaces with servants and guards and houses for his family members. He was assisted by soldiers bearing African ranks. The king was treated with every possible respect. Whoever obtained an audience had to kneel on the ground and fold his arms as a sign of submission and proof of respect (Relação 1988: 29).

Pereira de Costa (1951: IV, 511) turns de Rocha Pita's republic into a monárquia eletiva. We do not know - still according to Pereira de Costa - whether the Maroons had a party system. The notices by De Rocha Pita are interpreted by Clovis Moura (1972: 180) as if there was a council under the king of Palmares, which consisted of the heads of the various *mucambos* who frequently met in order to discuss all relevant affairs.

The Relação contains a whole list of chieftain names: Zumbi, Amaro, Acotirene, Tabocas, Osenga, Kafuxe, Zumbi's brother and Aqualtune, the mother of the king. This account creates an image of a conglomeration of

villages, each with its own chieftain, under a central authority. However, it does not make clear how strong this central authority was.

In Suriname the village chieftains were called 'captains'. A similar terminology was also used in Brazil. Manoel Lopez, one of the leaders of the troops against Palmares, called Zumbi a 'capitão' (Altavilla 1926: 61), whereas Mario Mello (1935: 182), writing about the structure of power in Palmares, observes: 'Abaixo dos reis, estavam os Capitães' (Next to the kings, they had captains). In both countries this name had probably been taken over from the colonial form of government.

The political structure of the Suriname Maroons is based on (matrilinear) kinship. Each tribe (there are six) consists of a number of matriclans. The clans trace back to ancestors who ran away from a certain plantation or region. The matri-clans have their own land rights and villages. Sometimes segments of several clans are living together in one village, but they live in somewhat separate parts. Did Palmares have an authority which coordinated the villages? In Suriname this exists. The Suriname Maroon tribes know the institute of the granman, the paramount chief. According to the oral tradition the granman is supplied by the matriclan which has been living in the jungle the longest. On the political organization in Palmares the *Relação* mentions that everybody is subordinate to a king, named Gangazumba, which means 'senhor Grande'. This mention can mean nothing else than that Ganga-Zumba is not a proper name but a title. A title which deviates very little from the Suriname granman. In Suriname also the Dutch governor was called granman by slaves and Maroons. Nina Rodriques (1932: 93) already indicated that *ganga* is a corruption of *ngana* and is derived from Kimbundo, in which language it means 'senhor/lord' as well as 'priest' (Rodrigues 1932: 93).

According to Schwartz the chief figure in the African ki-lombo was the *nganga a nzumbi,* a priest whose responsibility it was to deal with the spirits of the dead. The *ganga* Zumba of Palmares was probably the holder of this office (Schwartz 1992: 126-128).

In the period 1770-1795 Palmares knew two *ngangas.* The first one is called Gangazuma in the *Relação,* the second one is called Zumby in subsequent records. In both cases Zumba/i will not have been a proper name, but a title. The first Zumba/i is supposed to have been poisoned in 1678, after he had concluded peace with the Portuguese. The new Zumba/i was the person who got killed in 1796. He called the first Zumba/i uncle *(sobrinho).* It is remarkable that regularly mention is made of kinship between the leading Maroons. Sometimes the mother, the uncle, the nephew and the children of chieftains are mentioned. The succession of Zumba/i (I) by his nephew Zumba/i (II) would have been very acceptable in Suriname, as a chieftain is succeeded by one of his sister's sons in a matrilinear society.

As many have commented, the word *quilombo* originated in Angola. With the Imbangala, a people of warriors on the border between Angola and Kongo, usually called Jaga by the Portuguese, the ki-lombo was a male initiation society or circumcision camp where young men were prepared for adulthood and warrior status. The ki-lombo was a military society to which any man by training and initiation could belong. Designed for war, the ki-lombo created a powerful warrior cult by incorporating large numbers of strangers who lacked a common ancestry. It was a society structured by initiation rather than by kinship (Schwartz 1992: 126-127). Schwartz points out that the founders or the people who later became the leaders of Palmares, could have had an Angolan ki-lombo background. Of course not the entire ki-lombo concept would have been transferred to Brazil, but elements of it will certainly have been present in Palmares.

As regards the names of the villages, we can say that there are similarities between Suriname and Brazil. Some villages have a name of which it is not clear why the name was chosen, for instance: Subupira, Macaco, Mundao and Gongóro. Others were indicated by the description: 'village of ...' (Zumbi, Amaro, Acotirene, Tabocas, Osenga, Kafuxe and Aqualtune), whereas, according to Brandã (1935: 67), Dambrabanga is a corruption of Zala-Banga, which meant 'dwelling of the Banga-Maroons'. In Suriname the designation of villages can virtually always be explained. Misalasi (I will not leave), Alesikondre (rice village), Nomerimi (do not touch me), whereas also sometimes villages were named after their leader ('village of Kodjo, Koki, Puja'). Also in Suriname the name of the village sometimes referred to the ethnic mixture of inhabitants: Papakondre (village of Papa Negroes), Loangokondre (village of Loango Negroes), Creolendorp (Creole village, Creoles being slaves born in Suriname).

The Agricultural System

The villages of the Palmares Maroons were surrounded by provision-grounds and palm fields. The Maroons were familiar with the system of provision-grounds from the plantations, where the slaves grew their own crops. On the provision-grounds they cultivated beans, sweet potatoes, cassava, maize and sugarcane. Oddly enough no one mentions yams, a product which does very well in this region and which was a favourite food of the Suriname Maroons. The great importance the various palm trees had for the Maroons becomes clear from Blaer's journal.

Blaer's journal mentions that the troops could easily capture Palmares, because the Maroons were working on their provision-grounds, a situation we could also find in Suriname. There the Maroons often were away from their villages for weeks, as they stayed in separate huts near the provision-

grounds. Something similar was also the case in Palmares in 1645, as the journal reports that when the commando returned in April, it had burnt more than 60 huts that were standing in the provision-grounds.

The Maroons had plenty of fish from the rivers. They had large coops with chickens. They did not have any cattle, in order to eat meat they had to go hunting.[27] Also in Suriname the Maroons often had large quantities of chickens in their village. In 1768 a bush patrol in Suriname discovered a village consisting of 32 houses, with large chicken coops containing more than 700 chickens (Hoogbergen 1990: 58).

The main food was probably maize, which according to Barlaeus was planted and harvested twice a year. A few weeks before planting the forest was burnt down. After the harvest there were two weeks of celebrations. Today the first maize in Pernambuco is planted after 20 March at the start of the rainy season. At the end of June, when the first maize crop is harvested, there still is a period of big celebrations, especially around St. João (24 June). St. João is also a revered saint in Spain and Portugal. In average years - when it is not too dry - they plant twice a year also in these days.

According to Alves Filho (1988: 13-14) the land of the Palmares Maroons society was collective property, a statement he took over from Duvitiliano Ramos (1966: 98). There are no indications in that respect in the records. Ramos stated that the agricultural land belonged to the Maroon community as a whole, organized in villages and federations. The useful use of the land, the possession of the crops, belonged to the ones who worked the provision-grounds. For that matter Alves Filho remains very vague in his description of what 'propriedade coletiva' exactly means. Who formed in Maroon society the cooperative? The village, everybody, a group of relatives? Alves Filho states that collective ownership of the land is the best adaptation for a Maroon society and that individual ownership of land was also non-existent in pre-colonial Africa.

The last reason seems to me the strongest. In the agricultural organization, which is a subsistence economy, the Maroons fell back on the systems they had known in Africa, where rights to the use of land were owned by clans. The same solution was chosen by the Suriname Maroons. They also do not know any individual ownership of land. However, collective land does not mean collective production or collective right to the proceeds of this land. Each matrilinear group had (and still has) the right to use certain pieces of land. These rights are determined by history. The

[27]The Hague, Algemeen Rijksarchief. Archief Oude West-Indische Compagniën, *Daily Minutes* of 2 February 1644 and *Letters Received from Brazil* of 5 April 1644: 'remarkable chicken coops, although they did not possess other animals in large numbers, the blacks lived in the same way as in Angola'.

Suriname Maroons went to an empty piece of land and the family which cultivated a certain piece of land automatically got the right to use that land. Every member of the clan may grow his crops on the land of the clan. The cycle of planting, caring and harvesting is carried out by the women, each woman has her own land. The male family members or the husbands assist in clearing the land: cutting the trees and burning the cut trees and branches during the dry season. No one is allowed to grow something on the land of another clan without special permission, let alone harvest. The means of production for agriculture: axes, cutters and machetes are private property, the same applies to boats that are used to go to and from the provision-grounds.

Industry

From a letter of 1 June 1671 written by governor Fernão de Sousa Coutinho, it becomes clear that the Maroons of Palmares had iron and tools at their disposal, with which they were able to make weapons. The sertão where they live – Sousa Coutinho wrote – contains iron and nitrate (salitre), so they have everything they need for their defence.[28] According to Alves Filho (1988: 14) the availability of iron ore meant that the Maroons knew some kind of work division. He distinguishes four groups: camponeses (farmers), artesãos (craftsmen), guerreiros (warriors) and funcionários (public servants). The craftsmen made sickles, hammers and machetes. They also made earthenware pots and wooden utensils. We also know - still according to Alves Filho - that they made domestic utensils. It remains unclear where exactly Alves Filho got his information from. It seems to me that a Maroon community was not stratified to such an extent that separate professional groups could come into being. Blaer's journal mentions that there were various craftsmen among the inhabitants of Palmares. About the Suriname Maroons is known that there were blacksmiths among them. These people could repair iron objects. However being a craftsman or a blacksmith does not say, being a specialized person with no other things to do.

Religion

Palmares must have had small churches. It remains unclear whether the various villages each had its own little church or chapel. In view of the deeply religious disposition of Maroons in general, this will certainly have been the case. To what extent those churches were Catholic, syncretistic

[28] Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino in Lisbon, Records of Pernambuco, caixa 5, papéis avulsos. The text can be found in Ennes (1938: 24-6).

or houses for African gods remains in the dark. In 1645 Blaer's journal mentioned that the village he had captured had a church. The note that the religion of the Maroons of Palmares was an imitation of that of the Portuguese comes from Barlaeus. In itself this is not surprising. Slaves who were shipped from Portuguese-African ports got baptized before they embarked. Besides they were branded with a cross, not only as a sign that they had been baptized, but also to indicate that tax had been paid to the Crown. In Brazil the slaves arrived in extremely Catholic surroundings. The literature contains numerous references to a kind of syncretism of Catholicism and African popular beliefs and customs developing among the slaves. It is not surprising that the slaves who fled the plantations took that syncretistic belief with them. For the Calvinist Dutchmen with their believing in sermons and hymns, averse from hagiolatry, processions, promises, candles and incense, it was difficult to assess the religion of the Maroons at its true value.

For De Rocha Pita the Maroons of Palmares were 'cristãos cismáticos'. The only thing they supposedly had taken over from the Catholics was the cross, as well as some prayers which they had been completely transformed. He called them 'cismáticos' because they could not receive sacraments and had no (Catholic) priest in their midst. Costa (1951: IV, 230 and 510) quotes 'um notável escritor' (but I have not been able to find out who), who informed us that the Maroons had Christianity, copied from the Jesuits. Edison Carneiro (1947: 42-43) is also of the opinion that the religion of the Maroons of Palmares was similar to Catholicism.

Macaco had a little chapel with three statues, one very beautiful 'O Meninho-Jesus' (the Infant Jesus), one of 'Nossa Senhora da Conceição' and one of 'São Bras'.

Contact with other Groups of Population

The *Relação* elaborates on the contacts that existed between Maroons and other inhabitants of the colony. An extensive trade developed with the inhabitants of coastal villages. The inhabitants derived all kinds of advantages from those contacts. By being friendly with the Maroons they avoided their goods being stolen. Crops, fish and poultry were traded for weapons, gun powder, bullets, fruit wines, clothing and aguardente. The Maroons regularly paid with gold, silver and money, the origin of which was very obscure. The slaves of those inhabitants were also busy in the trade, hid them and warned against possible dangers. The relation between the inhabitants of those villages and the Maroons was so good, that when slaves of those inhabitants fled to them, they were returned immediately (Costa 1951: IV, 512-3).

Loreto Coutho (1904: 189) writes that some inhabitants had concluded a *trato oculto* with the Maroons. This description strongly resembles the *sweri* (bloodoath) ritual of the Suriname Maroons. Groups of Maroons roaming the forest, were always fearful of attacks by other groups of Maroons or Indians. If a group discovered another group in the neighbourhood, with which it wanted to live in peace, an alliance was formed in a ritual way. Often earth was mixed with a drink, to which blood of the persons concluding the pact was added. Little sips were taken from this drink (the *sweri* or *sweli)* and the basic thought behind it was that the *sweri* god would see to it that the pact (peace) was not broken.[29]

Language and Ethnic Background

Little is known about the ethnic background of the Maroons of Palmares and the language they spoke. De Rocha Pita states that Palmares' form of government had been copied from Angola. Various people (such as Rodrigues and Schwartz) have pointed out the Bantu origin of the term *nganga.* The *Relação* says about Zumbi's mother in law that she came from Angola. In the same *Relação* the seized Ganga-muisa is called the leader of the *gente de Angola* (the people from Angola). In itself the Bantu influences are not surprising, as the majority of the slaves imported through Recife in that period had a Bantu background.

A large number of Maroons must have been born in Brazil, probably even in freedom in Palmares, because of the large number of Maroons who were related to each other. In addition, in 1678 freedom was requested for all those who had been born in Palmares, to distinguish them from slaves who had come to the Maroons after that time.

In Suriname the Maroons who had first worked a number of years on the plantations, spoke the same language as the slaves: Sranan Tongo, an English-based Creole language. However, there were also slaves who fled to the Maroons virtually immediately after their arrival in the colony. These people did not know the slave language, and often they continued to speak African until they died. A number of those languages still remain as religious, sacral languages. From the moment the Maroons started to

[29]The *sweri* had deadly powers. *Sweri* was drunk when the Aukaners in 1760 concluded a peace treaty with the Suriname government. Granman Kofi Bosuman of the Saramaka Maroons drank *sweri* with the Maroons of Pasop, on which occasion he offered that group protection and declared to never hand them over. Later he would declare to the post holder that he could not hand over Pasop to him because of the deadly effect of that *sweri* (see Hoeree & Hoogbergen 1984). Also the Aukaner and Boni Maroons drank *sweri* together various times. See Hoogbergen 1990 (chapter 5).

form a cultural unit, their language started to deviate from the slave language, although the groups could understand each other.

There are no indications that the situation in Brazil was essentially different. In so far as the Maroons lived on plantations for a number of years they will have spoken *o dialeto da senzala,* a creole language based on Portuguese. Others will have continued to speak their African language. Considering the frequent contacts with Indians, Indian influence must also have been considerable. Freitas (1982) quotes a statement made by governor Francisco de Brito Freyre, which confirms this hypothesis: 'They speak a language which sometimes resembles the language of Guinee or Angola, sometimes Portuguese or the language of the Tupi Indians, but they do not speak their own, new language.'[30] Anyway, Maroons and governor used interpreters during the peace negotiations of 1678, which makes it clear that the dialect of the Maroons differed considerably from Portuguese.

Ideology

In this article I have tried to explain from which sources the story about Palmares has been put together. The main conclusion is that there are few reliable sources that tell something about the life of the Maroons and the internal structure of their society. Therefore a lot of what is said about that is speculation. The main source for the political organization of Palmares turns out to be De Rocha Pita. At points where this author could be verified due to other information which emerged from records (Zumbi's death and the role Domingos Jorge Velho played at the seizure of Zumbi's fortification), he turned out to be not very reliable.

For Black Brazilians, Palmares is more than just another historic event. This episode in history takes up a place in the emancipation ideology of the Brazilian black movement. For more than ten years now annual commemorations have been organized near the place where Zumbi threw himself off the rocks. The first black archbishop in Brazil was called Dom Zumbi.

The story about the alternative black community in the Brazilian jungle therefore means different things to the various discourses. In schoolbooks, read the mentioned ones of Osvaldo R. de Souza and Paulo Alcantara, it is important to emphasize that slaves did not remain helplessly on the plantations, but instead built up alternative communities. This is why those books for the youth say that Maroons of Palmares had cattle and

[30] "Falavam uma língua toda sua, às vezes parecendo da Guiné ou de Angola, outras vezes parecendo o português e tupi, mas não é nenhuma dessas e sim outra língua nova".

workshops, where clothes (etc.) were made. It stresses the independence of runaway blacks from colonial society.

For the rational historian it might be important to accentuate that we know so little about the internal structure of Palmares, that we better not talk about it, for the emancipatory discourse the position is the reverse.

Because we know so little about it, we can fill in the alternative according to our own ideals. For the emancipatory discourse it remains important that Zumbi preferred death to surrender. Therefore it is only logical that both versions of the history are told in the history books of Souto Maior. That history is science, is an academic opinion, that history is myth, seems to me a more useful option from a social point of view.

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The Morant Bay Rebellion: Its Novelists and Historians

Gad Heuman (Coventry)

Introduction

The Morant Bay Rebellion broke out in Jamaica on October 11, 1865. On that day, several hundred black people marched into the town of Morant Bay, the capital of the predominately sugar-growing parish of St. Thomas in the east. They pillaged the police station of its weapons and then confronted the volunteer militia which had been called up to protect the meeting of the vestry, the political body which administered the parish. Fighting erupted between the militia and the crowd and, by the end of the day, the crowd had killed eighteen people and wounded thirty-one others. Seven members of the crowd died. In the days which followed, bands of people in different parts of the parish killed two planters and threatened the lives of many others. The disturbances spread across the parish of St. Thomas in the east, from its western border with St. David to its northern boundary with Portland.

The response of the Jamaican authorities was swift and brutal. Making use of the army, Jamaican forces, and the Maroons (formerly a community of runaway slaves who were now an irregular but effective army of the colony), the government vigorously put down the rebellion. In the process, nearly 500 people were killed and hundreds of others seriously wounded. The nature of the suppression led to demands in England for an official inquiry, and a royal commission subsequently took evidence in Jamaica on the disturbances for nearly three months. Its conclusions were critical of the governor, Edward John Eyre, and of the severe repression in the wake of the rebellion. As a result, the governor was dismissed. More importantly, the political constitution of the colony was transformed and its 200-year-old assembly abolished.

In the months which followed the outbreak and in the period since, there has been considerable debate about the origin and nature of the disturbances. The governor and nearly all the whites and browns in the colony believed that the island was faced with a rebellion. They saw it as part of an island-wide conspiracy to put blacks in power. This was not surprising in the light of the Haitian revolution at the end of the eighteenth century and the massive 1831 slave revolt in Jamaica. Equally important, Jamaican society was demographically skewed: the overwhelming propor-

tion of the population was black while whites and people of mixed race or coloureds formed a small segment of the population. For the whites and browns of Jamaica, the governor's actions in putting down the rebellion had saved the colony for Britain and preserved them from annihilation.

At the same time, there was a different perspective of the outbreak, especially in Britain. There, the humanitarian lobby perceived it as a spontaneous disturbance, a riot which did not warrant the repression which followed in its wake. John Stuart Mill and others formed the Jamaica Committee, hoping to bring the governor to trial in England and thereby establish the limits of imperial authority.[1]

This paper seeks to address the subsequent treatment of the rebellion. The debate about whether it was a riot or a rebellion has continued among historians and scholars. Moreover, novelists such as V.S. Reid, have incorporated the events at Morant Bay in their work, sometimes making use of the rebellion for their own ends. The paper will therefore begin with the fictional treatment of Morant Bay in V.S. Reid's *New Day* and then discuss the views of the historians of Morant Bay.

V.S. Reid and the Morant Bay Rebellion

In *New Day,* V.S. Reid uses the fictional history of the Campbell family, a mixed race family living in St. Thomas in the east, to deal with the history of Jamaica in the period from 1865 to 1944. The narrator of the novel is Johnny Campbell, who was eight years old at the time of the Morant Bay Rebellion, and was still alive in 1944. This was the year of Jamaica's new constitution which granted universal adult suffrage and pointed the way toward self-government. For Reid, the inauguration of the new constitution was the "new day" of the novel.

Reid's portrayal of the Morant Bay Rebellion is very graphic. Taking his cue from the events at Morant Bay on 11 October 1865, Reid has the people of Stony Gut, a small village in the Blue Mountains above Morant Bay, march into town and attack the vestry. The court house is burned down, and many of its occupants are slaughtered by the crowd. In the battle between the crowd and the militia, seven members of the crowd are killed and many others are wounded. The leader of the rebellion, Paul Bogle, is seen leading his forces against the militia and the members of the vestry.

Yet Reid's Bogle is very different from the historical Bogle. In *New Day,* Bogle is seeking secession from the British Empire; he wants "total

[1] Heuman, *'The Killing Time'.*

freedom".[2] The narrator's brother, Davie, who is nineteen years old in 1865, supports Bogle against the wishes of his father, Pa Campbell, a morally upright headman. Pa Campbell worked on the estate of George William Gordon, a brown politician who was hanged for his alleged involvement in the rebellion. When Pa Campbell criticizes Bogle for his "wickedness", Davie responds:

> Wickedness? Wickedness? You call it so? Wickedness to want even rice and flour and osnaburg while buckra Englishman eats bacon and wears Shantung silk? Why do they no' make us govern ourselves and see if we would no' eat bacon too? Why they will no' give us the vote to all o' us and make us choose our own Council?[3]

Yet the historical Bogle had no such ideas. He was not seeking independence from Britain; on the contrary, Bogle was very careful to underscore his loyalty to the Queen. When he and his supporters liberated the jail at Morant Bay, releasing the fifty-one prisoners who were there at the time, Bogle insisted that the prisoners "must get their own clothes, for he would not like to rebel against the Queen, and he would not strike as a rebel against the Queen, and so they wanted their own clothing". The prison officer had to break open the chest where the personal clothes of the prisoners were kept and hand them out.[4]

Reid chooses to describe Bogle in a very different light. For Reid, Bogle is seeking ideas more characteristic of Jamaica in the 1940s, when universal adult suffrage was on the agenda. As Nana Wilson-Tagoe suggests, whenever a historical novelist modifies history in this manner, "he inevitably implies a moral judgement and indicates an intention to produce something more satisfying to his sense of right than the real events of the past". Reid's Bogle is therefore too radical and is contrasted with the moderation of the narrator's father, Pa Campbell. In Reid's view, Bogle's actions lead to self-destruction, to the mindless violence at the Morant Bay court house.[5]

There are other images of Bogle and of his supporters in *New Day* which are equally problematical. For example, Reid presents Bogle as a wild man, unable to understand the advice of the more rational politician, George William Gordon. Johnny Campbell recalls his mother's view of Bogle:

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[2]Reid, *New Day,* p. 13.
[3]Reid, *New Day,* p. 15.
[4]Heuman, *'The Killing Time',* p. 13.
[5]Nana Wilson-Tagoe, *The Historical Imagination,* ch. 2.

> 'Member I remember that Mother even said: A good, for that Paul Bogle is a wild one and does not understand what Mr. Gordon means when he speaks with him.[6]

Reid's crowd from Stony Gut is also curious: it has blacks, browns and poor whites. Moreover, Reid chooses to contrast the poverty of the crowd with the wealth and lavish display of the vestrymen at Morant Bay.

> Listen me. I ha' heard from Davie about these Vestry dinners. He says whenever there is Vestry meeting, Custos and the Vestrymen always sit down to big banquet. Many tales I have heard about whole hogs with pimento and fresh mint packing their insides in sweet scents. Heard o' great white yams brought all the way from Westmoreland parish and powdering as they reach your tongue; roasted yellow hearts o' breadfruit tasting like goats'-milk butter... But presently I see cook-women carrying platters from the kitchen to the banquet-room upstairs. Morant Bay hungry people see it too, and such a howl comes from their hungry bellies![7]

Yet there is no historical evidence of white involvement in the crowd which marched from Morant Bay. Equally, while it is likely that there were significant differences between the wealth of some of the vestrymen and that of the crowd, there are no historical descriptions of the vestry dinners or of the hunger which affected the people of Morant Bay. Reid's images present stark contrasts to heighten the dramatic effect.

Moreover, Reid reinforces his image of Bogle by contrasting it with Johnny's brother, Davie, and by suggesting that the people from Stony Gut had mixed with the Morant Bay crowd and lost their way. Davie was opposed to the killing at Morant Bay and was very worried about the possible consequences of the violence:

> I told Deacon [Bogle] we should no' kill but take them to the Gut, where they would be hostages if war comes. But is that what he does? No. Stoney Gut men get mixed with Morant Bay rabble and do as the rabble would do. Will this no' turn even our friends from we? Is what Mr. Gordon and the other will say now? Think say the Maroons will come to we when they hear we ha' mixed with the Morant Bay people? Think say those proud fightermen will want to march side-and-side with riff-raff? Is what it that makes Deacon Bogle such a dam' fool?[8]

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[6] Reid, *New Day*, p. 26.
[7] Reid, *New Day*, p. 105.
[8] Reid, *New Day*, p. 129.

Reid is opposed to the killing at Morant Bay. In rewriting history, he favoured the people proceeding by petitions to improve their situation rather than by resorting to violence.[9] When Bogle kills the Custos of the parish, renamed Custos Aldenburgh in the novel, it is "a ritualistic, cleansing and liberating act, but also in another sense as a mindless and unrestrained act of violence". For Wilson-Tagoe, "this double-edged view points to a personal distrust of spontaneity and mass consciousness on the part of Reid..."[10]

From Reid's perspective, George William Gordon, the brown representative of St. Thomas in the east to the House of Assembly, becomes the figure of moderation in contrast to Paul Bogle. In *New Day,* Gordon responds to the threat of violence from the people of Stony Gut with an appeal for them to cease all violence. Since Gordon was ill, the people should wait until he could visit them personally.[11] Reid repeats this image of Gordon in a children's novel, *Sixty-Five,* which he published eleven years after *New Day.* In *Sixty-Five,* the wise grandfather of the novel berates Bogle for the events at Morant Bay:

> 'You are a poor foolish man,' he said softly. 'You don't know what you have started. Better you had waited a while longer, and kept on with the meetings as Mr Gordon wanted you to do.[12]

Yet this image of Gordon as a moderate contrasts sharply with the historical reality.

Gordon was a radical, a Presbyterian turned Native Baptist and an advocate for the rights of the blacks in the House of Assembly. He was openly hostile to the leading figures in the parish of St. Thomas in the east: the Custos, Baron von Ketelhodt and the Anglican curate in Bath, Rev. Victor Herschell. Making use of the apocalyptic language of the Baptists, Gordon described the custos and Herschell as "a very wicked band, and the Lord will reward them all". In the placard designed to round up support for a meeting in Morant Bay, Gordon went even further: he portrayed Ketelhodt as "an unscrupulous and oppressive foreigner". As for Governor Eyre, he was "an evil-doer" and "the Lord will plenteously reward him". Elsewhere, Gordon wrote that the governor "was a plague-spot on poor Jamaica".[13] This language was revealing. As Thomas Holt has concluded, it provided evidence that for Gordon as well as for Paul

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[9]Nana Wilson-Tagoe, *The Historical Imagination,* ch. 2.
[10]Nana Wilson-Tagoe, *The Historical Imagination,* ch. 2.
[11]Reid, *New Day,* p. 137.
[12]Reid, *Sixty-Five,* p. 71.
[13]Heuman, *'The Killing Time',* p. 68.

Bogle, "religion shaped their world-view and gave a strong millennial undercurrent to their vision of political entitlement and social justice".[14]

But for V.S. Reid, Gordon's language and sense of entitlement were not important. Rather, it was critical to point out that Jamaica "could be served best not by mass violence and secession but by cautious agitation and argument". Instead of freedom, the violence at Morant Bay unleashes uncontrollable forces which are counterproductive.[15]

One of the casualties of these forces is Pa Campbell. Like so many of the people killed by British soldiers and the Maroons in the aftermath of the rebellion, Pa Campbell was innocent. In his case, he had reluctantly fled to the hills with his family to hide from the forces of repression. But he had emerged prematurely, while the soldiers were still looking for him. Although he had just learned that George William Gordon had been hanged, Campbell simply could not believe that it was not possible to discuss the situation, even with Governor Eyre. In any case, British soldiers would not shoot Christians:

> My father said: 'I will go down. Mr. Gordon can no' die in vain. I will ask to see Governor Eyre. I am no' a Stoney Gut man. The English will no' make war on Christians.'[16]

A few minutes later, Campbell was dead, shot by the soldiers he believed would protect him.

Yet in spite of the terrible repression, Reid maintains that some good could come from the events at Morant Bay. Despite his overriding caution and belief in moderation, he also believes that representative government would return to Jamaica one day. At that point, it would be a government of the people rather than one in name only. When Davie Campbell appears before the Royal Commissioners investigating the rebellion, he suggests that the people who marched on the court house may not have died in vain:

> How so? Representative government will come back to our island one day, one day. And mark me, Your Honours, there will be no buckras making the laws then, but the said poor like whom they have killed, and a Governor of the people will be sitting in St. Jago [the capital]. For we will ha' learnt that sympathy for the poor must come from the poor. Then who can say that time that St. Thomas people died in vain?[17]

In this manner, Reid is pointing the way toward 1944 and the new day of the new constitution. It is Davie's grandson, Garth, who leads

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[14]Holt, *The Problem of Freedom,* p. 293.
[15]Nana Wilson-Tagoe, *The Historical Imagination,* ch. 2.
[16]Reid, *New Day,* p. 153.
[17]Reid, *New Day,* p. 195.

the Jamaican people toward self-government. But, for Reid, Garth represents the educated middle class who should be responsible for raising the workers' awareness "instead of making it the climax of spontaneous self-expression". History, for Reid, moves "beyond the precise details of what happened to incorporate an imaginative exploration of what could be possible".[18] From a different vantage point, historians of Morant Bay have not had the same possibilities as Reid, but they have differed on the events and significance of the rebellion.

The Historians and Morant Bay

Many historians have dealt with the Morant Bay Rebellion, although in most cases, they have done so as part of a larger work or as the culminating event in the post-emancipation period of Jamaican history. Two classic studies, Philip D. Curtin, *Two Jamaicas: The Role of Ideas in a Tropical Colony, 1830-1865* (1955) and Douglas Hall, *Free Jamaica, 1838-1865: An Economic History* (1959) fall into this latter category. Curtin regards Morant Bay as "another in the succession of riots since emancipation"; it was a demonstration which turned into a riot and then into a rebellion after the events at the court house on October 11.[19] For Hall, the rebellion was a local riot which was not markedly different from the riots in Falmouth six years previously. Hall believes that it was the reaction of the governor and the nature of the suppression which distinguished Morant Bay.[20] Another study, Mavis Christine Campbell, *The Dynamics of Change in a Slave Society: A Sociopolitical History of the Free Coloreds of Jamaica, 1800-1865* (1976) adopts a similar perspective: she sees Morant Bay as "nothing but a local riot" and in modern terms, as "not unlike current 'marches' or 'sit-ins'".[21] In my view, Curtin, Hall and Campbell underestimate the planning and organization of the rebellion; they also devote relatively little space to the outbreak itself.

Several other studies have discussed the rebellion, but only as part of a larger work. Geoffrey Dutton, *The Hero as Murderer: The Life of Edward John Eyre, Australian Explorer and Governor of Jamaica, 1815-1901* (1967) is a biography of Eyre and an attempt to rehabilitate the governor. Although containing some useful information, it presents a biased and dated view of Paul Bogle and George William Gordon. In my earlier book, *Between Black and White: Race, Politics, and the Free Col-*

[18]Nana Wilson-Tagoe, *The Historical Imagination,* ch. 2.
[19]Curtin, *Two Jamaicas,* pp. 195, 178.
[20]Hall, *Free Jamaica,* pp. 249-50.
[21]Campbell, *The Dynamics of Change,* p. 337.

oreds in Jamaica, 1792-1865 (1981), I consider Morant Bay principally in light of the response of the free coloureds to the outbreak. Bernard Semmel, *The Governor Eyre Controversy* (1962) is a very useful work but deals mainly with the aftermath of the rebellion in England. Two other books, Monica Schuler, *"Alas, Alas, Kongo": A Social History of Indentured African Immigration into Jamaica, 1841-1865* (1980) and Robert J. Stewart, *Religion and Society in Post-Emancipation Jamaica* (1992) are excellent studies of the period. However, Schuler concentrates on African participation in the rebellion and Stewart on the religious background to the outbreak.

Other works deal more fully with the rebellion itself. William A. Green, *British Slave Emancipation: The Sugar Colonies and the Great Experiment, 1830-1865* (1976) maintains that the uprising was a local action "rooted in grievances which were common to blacks throughout the island". For Green, Morant Bay might have led to other outbreaks elsewhere in the island had it been more sustained; moreover, he believes that the implications of the rebellion were "broad and dangerous".[22] Don Robotham, *"The Notorious Riot": The Socio-Economic and Political Bases of Paul Bogle's Revolt* (1981), is an important analysis of the rebellion. He rightly points to the premeditation and planning involved in the outbreak. Yet Robotham concentrates on the background to the rebellion rather than on the outbreak itself.

Two recent studies examine Morant Bay as part of the history of protest in Jamaica beginning with the slave rebellion in 1831 and ending with the labour disturbances of the 1930s. Abigail Bakan, *Ideology and Class Conflict in Jamaica: The Politics of Rebellion* (1990) is a work of synthesis; she does not intend to provide a detailed historical account of the rebellion. Instead, her aim "is to identify a general and recurrent pattern of ideological resistance among the direct producers over a broad historical period of development". However, Bakan does emphasize the importance of land in understanding the rebellion.[23] Thomas Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938* (1992) is the best treatment of the rebellion in literature. He concludes that Morant Bay was a rebellion and sees areas of unity between sugar workers and peasants in the outbreak. For Holt, the native Baptists were crucial in providing a vehicle for "cultural resistance" and for bringing together a religious world view and a heightened political consciousness. But although impressive, Holt devotes only a chapter to Morant Bay in a larger study of Jamaica from 1832 to 1938.[24]

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[22] Green, *The Sugar Colonies*, p. 390.
[23] Bakan, *Ideology and Class Conflict*, pp. 11, 87.
[24] Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, pp. 291, 300-301.

While I agree with Holt and also with Robotham's view of the rebellion, my book on the rebellion, *'The Killing Time'*, is different in that it focuses entirely on the uprising. *'The Killing Time'* seeks to provide more detail on the outbreak and spread of the rebellion as well as on the background to it, the reasons for its occurrence in St. Thomas in the east, and the nature of the military and political suppression.

Although following a different pattern, the historiography on Morant Bay has unwittingly taken on some of the perspectives highlighted by Reid's *New Day*. The most recent scholars on Morant Bay have seen the events as a rebellion and as potentially dangerous. In this view, the rebellion was not intent on creating an independent Jamaica or even overturning the whole plantation structure. Instead, it was a local rebellion which sought to replace the parish authorities and possibly the wider colonial administration. Although Reid does have Bogle argue for secession, his Morant Bay is a vision of an uprising "which sought to redefine the ex-slave's position within the system" and to secure a place for the freedmen within the existing structure.[25] Reid criticized Bogle's methods and the violence at Morant Bay, but, like the historians, he too was interested in the meaning of freedom for the people of Jamaica.

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II

Another History: Oral and Hidden Discourses

Empowering and Engendering Hidden Histories in Caribbean Peasant Communities

Jean Besson (London)

Reflecting on the United States South in the 1970s, Eugene Genovese observed that 'the history of the lower classes has yet to be written' (1971:102). In the 1980s, the anthropologist Eric Wolf wrote of *Europe and the People Without History,* arguing that '[W]e ... need to uncover the history of "the people without history"- the active histories of "primitives", peasantries, labourers, immigrants, and besieged minorities' (1982:v). Keesing likewise noted that Third World peasant communities were still being regarded as 'more or less closed and self-contained, and often as devoid of known history' (1981:423). While significant progress in these fields has since been made, academics, journalists and Native Americans all felt it necessary to point to the hidden histories of the post-Columbian Americas in the context of the 'New World' quincentenary in 1992 (e.g. Ellwood 1991; Menchú 1992; Besson 1992a, 1992b). This theme was again highlighted in 1994 by the 48th International Congress of Americanists.[1]

This neglect of 'the people without history' has perhaps been nowhere more pronounced than in the Caribbean Region, which has been variously described as the 'Third World's third world' (Naipaul 1973), the 'oldest colonial sphere' (Mintz 1971a:17), the 'gateway to Europe's New World' (Besson 1994c), and the 'core area' of African America (Mintz 1989:22). Here the Native Americans were virtually wiped out, and post-Conquest societies manufactured through European colonialism, American plantations, Euro-Asian indenture, and African slavery. In the 1970s and 1980s, Mintz highlighted the neglect, by both anthropologists and historians, of the region's history and emergent contemporary cultures (1970, 1971b, 1975, 1989). He argued that this stemmed from anthropology's traditional bias towards the study of so-called 'primitive' societies untouched by change and the fact that the post-Conquest Caribbean (forged through catastrophic change) did not fall under this rubric, and from a Eurocentric approach to the region's past. The mutual disregard of history and anthropology, as 'historians concentrated on documentary materials, an-

[1]The 48th International Congress of Americanists, held in Sweden, 4-9 July 1994, focused on the theme 'Threatened Peoples and Environments in the Americas'.

thropologists on field studies of living people' (Mintz 1975:482), was a further factor constraining Caribbean cultural history. In 1992, in the first entry on the region in the *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Trouillot wrote in similar vein of the Caribbean as 'An Open Frontier in Anthropological Theory', identifying the continuing marginality of Caribbean anthropology, where '[F]ew dare to bring explicitly to the discipline the political or metatheoretical lessons learned on the frontier' (1992:35). In 1994, there are still few Caribbean anthropology courses in British universities.[2]

Nevertheless, anthropologists and historians, as well as specialists in Creole languages and literature, have begun to uncover the processes of adaptation and resistance by Caribbean peoples to colonialism, slavery, indenture and persisting land monopoly; processes which have included slave rebellion, marronage, and creolisation or culture-building. Within this context, however, Mintz has identified the continuing neglect of the 'reconstituted peasantries', fashioned out of earlier economic forms such as plantation labourers and rebel slaves, who 'represent a *mode of response* to the plantation system and its connotations, and a *mode of resistance* to imposed styles of life' (1989:132-33).

Mintz's own work on modes of peasantization and aspects of the peasant life-style, such as the house-yard complex, and agriculture, marketing and cuisine (e.g. 1983, 1985, 1989), has pioneered the study of Caribbean peasantries and contributed to economic anthropology and the anthropology of food. His work has generated further research and, in the second edition of *Caribbean Transformations*, he remarked that 'two scholars in particular have significantly advanced our understanding of Caribbean peasant societies in recent years' (Mintz 1989:xxvii). Here Mintz noted Trouillot's (1988) study of the Dominican banana peasantry in the world economy. The other contribution referred to was my own work on land and kinship in the 'free villages' of Trelawny Parish, Jamaica (Besson 1979, 1984a, 1984b, 1987a, 1987b). However, Mintz pointed to the need for a book-length study of one of these villages, Martha Brae, which had transformed a colonial town at the heart of plantation society. He also re-stated that: '[T]he fact is that too few observers have analyzed the [Caribbean] peasant life-style with the seriousness it deserves', and 'relatively few books and papers have dealt with the origins and history of peasant subcultures and the similarities and differences among them. Even rarer are historical studies which deal in a detailed fashion with one

[2]Exceptions to this neglect are the courses on the Caribbean Region, established and taught by the author, first at the Universities of Edinburgh and Aberdeen, and currently in the Anthropology Department at Goldsmiths College, University of London.

or another aspect of rural life in the region as a whole' (Mintz 1989:144, 230).

This paper seeks to develop these perspectives by addressing Mintz's threefold methodology for empowering the hidden histories of Caribbean peasantries, within the theoretical context of creolisation, namely: in-depth analysis of the peasant life-style, comparative study of the cultural history of peasant communities, and regional analysis of ethnographic features.[3] The discussion is divided into three main sections. The first outlines Martha Brae's two histories, which are receiving in-depth attention in a book-length study (Besson, in preparation). I briefly integrate the Euro-Caribbean history, which is the settlement's only recorded history, and outline how the Afro-Caribbean cultural history is being empowered by analysing 'the peasant life-style with the seriousness it deserves' (Mintz 1989:144).

The second section locates Martha Brae's Afro-Caribbean history and emergent culture within the comparative study of six other peasant communities in west-central Jamaica, thus analysing 'the origins and history' of seven peasant communities at the heart of the Caribbean plantation-peasant interface, 'and the similarities and differences among them' (Mintz 1989:230). Four of these communities - Granville, Refuge, Kettering and Alps - are, like post-slavery Martha Brae, the free villages in Trelawny mentioned previously, but all provide variations on the creolisation theme at the vanguard of the Caribbean post-emancipation peasant movement. The sixth community, Accompong in St. Elizabeth Parish adjoining Trelawny, is descended from rebel slaves and is the oldest post-treaty corporate Maroon society in the Americas. The seventh village is Aberdeen in St. Elizabeth, the nearest non-Maroon community to Accompong. This

[3]My usage of the concept 'peasant' draws on the work of Dalton and Mintz. Dalton (1967:265-67, 1971) defines 'peasant' as a broad middle category between the two extremes of tribal and post-peasant modern farmer, with socio-economic organisation typified by subsistence production combined with production for sale; incomplete land and labour markets (the former allowing for the existence of customary tenures, the latter for the sale of labour to augment traditional production - thus generating occupational multiplicity); the virtual absence of machine technology; and a significant retention of traditional social organisation and culture. Dalton's definition encompasses various subtypes, including the 'hybrid/composite peasantries' of Latin America and the Caribbean. Within this subtype, Caribbean 'reconstituted peasantries', originating in slavery and the plantation system (Mintz 1989:132), can be further distinguished. Mintz defines 'peasantry' in general as a class or classes of 'small-scale cultivators who own or have access to land', who produce some commodities for sale and also buy from markets, who produce much of their own subsistence, and are 'dependent in various ways upon wider political and economic spheres of control' (1989:132,141). He highlights the significance of land for both peasants in general and Caribbean peasantries.

section therefore also crosses the Maroon/non-Maroon divide to compare creolisation in African-American Maroon and non-Maroon peasant formations (cf. Besson 1994d), as called for by R.T. Smith (1975:149) in his review of Price (1973; cf. Price 1979:424).

The third section shows how empowering the hidden histories of these seven Jamaican peasant communities leads to a wider analysis of a central 'aspect of rural life in the region as a whole' (Mintz 1989:230), namely, Caribbean customary land tenures based on kinship and community. For in all these Jamaican villages, such creole tenures, which are linked with ritual and embued with oral tradition, represent repositories of hidden history and culture-building; a theme that can be widely identified in Caribbean rural communities. I synthesise and reinterpret the scattered and conflicting regional literature, in the light of my research in Jamaica and the Eastern Caribbean, and address the gender dimension which has not received the attention it deserves. In conclusion, I briefly suggest how empowering and engendering the hidden histories of peasant communities on the Caribbean 'frontier' (Trouillot 1992:35) may have wider relevance to anthropology.

Martha Brae's Two Histories

I turn first to the case of Martha Brae's two post-Conquest histories. The received history of this Jamaican settlement under British rule is scattered in many sources, which deal both with the planter town itself and with its parishes of Old St. James and new Trelawny in Cornwall County. I draw together, in outline, this dispersed Euro-Caribbean history and then briefly reconstruct the hidden Afro-Caribbean cultural history.

Martha Brae was established in 1762 as the first colonial town in the eastern part of Old St. James (Fremmer 1968), on the site of a former Arawak settlement whose pre-Conquest history is irretrievable (Goodwin 1946:13).[4] At the time of the establishment of the town, British Jamaica, with French Saint-Domingue, was one of the world's two richest dependencies, based on its sugar-and-slave economy, and St James was producing three sevenths of Jamaica's sugar (Black 1984:19).

The town was situated on the Martha Brae River, about two miles upstream from the coast, at a point where the sugar plantations of Holland and Irving Tower adjoined. Holland was owned by Henry Cuniffe, an English planter and surveyor. Irving Tower had been established three

[4] After the Spanish Conquest of Jamaica in 1494, one of the earliest Spanish settlements in the island was also established on this site, prior to English colonisation in 1655 (Goodwin 1946:13; Fremmer 1967).

years earlier, in 1759, by the Scots planter James Irving.[5] The town was to serve as a supply point for such surrounding estates and was laid out by Cuniffe on the hilly margins of his Holland plantation. When the new parish of Trelawny (with an area of 333 square miles) was created out of eastern St. James in 1771, at the zenith of Jamaica's so-called 'Golden Age', Martha Brae became Trelawny's first capital and Henry Cuniffe its first Custos (Ogilvie 1954:2-7; Fremmer 1968).

At the time of its creation, Trelawny Parish contained 'about half the population, but much less than half the sugar production' of Old St. James (Jacobs 1970:14). However, Trelawny soon developed to become the centre of the island's sugar economy, with more plantations and slaves than any other parish in Jamaica (Ogilvie 1954:150; Fremmer 1970; Craton 1978:37-38). For the first twenty years of Trelawny's 'Golden Age', Martha Brae was the centre of parochial government and social life, and the hub of the parish's plantocracy, most of whom had a town house in Martha Brae. By 1790 Martha Brae was a flourishing Georgian town, with a Court, Vestry and Militia, and ships bound for Bristol and Liverpool, England, loaded Trelawny's sugar from Martha Brae (Fremmer 1967, 1968; Jacobs 1970:14).

Despite this initial prosperity, dissatisfaction with Martha Brae as Trelawny's capital was present almost from its inception. By around 1800, Martha Brae became eclipsed by the new coastal port of Falmouth, founded on one of the estates of the Barrett planter dynasty of Jamaica's North Coast and London's Wimpole Street. By the early nineteenth century Martha Brae had become a ghost town (Ogilvie 1954:6, 32-35; Fremmer 1967, 1968; Jacobs 1970; Black 1979).

Martha Brae's recorded history focuses on the splendour of the colonial planter town and dismisses contemporary Martha Brae as 'a mere scatter of houses' (Wright and White 1969:46; Black 1979; cf. Fremmer 1968; Sherlock 1984:119). However, my fieldwork revealed that Martha Brae is now a peasant community of some 800 persons, in 170 households, descended from former slaves. Historical research further showed that by 1839, one year after emancipation, the ghost-town had been taken over by ex-slave squatters from Holland and Irving Tower plantations. The Trelawny Vestry retrieved the 'captured land', which was then purchased by the Baptist Church in the 1840s and resold to ex-slaves (Ogilvie 1954:24-25; Fremmer 1968; Besson 1987b:114-15).

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[5]Island Record Office, Jamaica, Grantors Old Series 4, Lib. 165, f.11. By 1767 the English-Creole planter John Tharp (1736-1804) had established his consolidated plantations centred at Good Hope, five miles inland from Martha Brae. Tharp, who initially shipped his sugar from Martha Brae, would make one of the largest fortunes from sugar in the British West Indies (Tenison 1971; Craton 1975:254 n15).

Martha Brae's Afro-Caribbean history can therefore be seen to originate in the exodus of many freed slaves from the British West Indian plantations after emancipation in 1834-38, and in the nonconformist church-founded village system. These developments were most pronounced in the island of Jamaica and the parish of Trelawny (Paget 1964; Mintz 1989:157-79; Hall 1978; Besson 1984b, 1992c). In the Caribbean plantation heartlands of Trelawny, the flight from the estates and the church-founded village movement were rooted in traditions of slave resistance and nonconformist anti-slavery struggle; in the alliance between Baptist missionaries and slaves; and in draconian post-emancipation planter policies.[6] I will outline these origins of Martha Brae's 'new' history and then show how they generated the cultural history of the 'reconstituted' peasant community.

The Baptist missionary William Knibb, who led the nonconformist anti-slavery struggle and the Jamaican Baptist free village movement, was stationed at Falmouth in Trelawny. Slave resistance in Trelawny included marronage, rebellion and a pronounced 'proto-peasant' adaptation (Mintz 1989:152) among plantation slaves. Runaway slaves joined the Leeward Maroons in the Cockpit Country Mountains straddling Trelawny, St. Elizabeth and St. James. Trelawny slaves also participated in the 1831 slave rebellion in western Jamaica that catalysed the abolition of slavery throughout the British Empire.

The chattel slaves who remained on Trelawny's plantations also resisted, but in more subtle ways, asserting their humanity and establishing some autonomy by creating pronounced proto-peasant economies and communities. Estate owners allocated hilly and mountainous plantation backlands to their slaves for provision grounds to enable cheap subsistence, due to the high cost of importing food. The slaves developed domestic economies (based on these backlands and slave village yards) well beyond the planters' rationale, producing surpluses for sale, for example at the Falmouth market established in the late eighteenth century. At the zenith of plantation slavery, Jamaican slaves, including those of Trelawny, controlled one fifth of the island's currency through such marketing activities (Mintz 1989:180-213).

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[6]Some scholars (e.g. Hall 1978) have argued that the flight of freed slaves from the British Caribbean plantations was due to post-slavery planter attitudes, policies and legislation restricting the ex-slaves' use of estate houses, gardens and provision grounds in order to keep the freed slaves as a dependent labour force tied to the plantations. Others (e.g. Mintz 1989) have interpreted the exodus as a continuation of a tradition of slave resistance and the hunger of the former slaves for land of their own. For a fuller review and resolution of the debate see Besson 1992c.

A customary cognatic (i.e. nonunilineal) system of descent, burial, and land transmission, incorporating both men and women and their male and female descendants, was also created by these legally landless, kinless slaves (Besson 1992c:189-90, 1994c, 1994d). As early as 1793, Bryan Edwards noted a system of customary inheritance among the Jamaican slaves, including the transmission of land rights; in the early nineteenth century Stewart observed that each slave had such rights to land (Edwards 1793, 2:133, and Stewart 1823:267, quoted in Mintz 1989:187, 207). This gender equality among male and female slaves, who were 'equal under the whip' (L. Mathurin 1975:4), provided the foundation for the system of cognatic descent and land transmission, rooted in the transformation of privileges to customary rights (cf. Gaspar 1992:135), especially given the significance of women as field slaves and the matrilateral emphasis in slave yards and communities.[7]

A creole Myal cosmology with elaborate mortuary ritual, reflecting the perception of an active spirit world including ancestral kin, reinforced this customary system with its descent-based burial pattern and further elaborated culture-building in Jamaican slave communities. This was especially so in Trelawny, which was the centre of the island's Myal movement (Schuler 1980). With Baptist missionising in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Native Baptist Christianity, controlled by Myalism, nurtured the 1831 slave rebellion.

After emancipation from 1834-38, planter attitudes were draconian, particularly in Trelawny where the plantation economy continued to expand well beyond the abolition of slavery (Paget 1964:42; Jacobs 1970:16). Trelawny planter policies included notices to the freed slaves to quit plantation lands, and the sale of estate backlands used as provision grounds, in an attempt to destroy the production of the former proto-peasants and create a landless rural proletariat dependent on low-waged labour on the estates. These policies, reinforced by island-wide legislation such as the ejectment and trespass acts, however backfired in Trelawny and throughout Jamaica, as ex-slaves left the plantations wherever possible to acquire land through squatting, rental or purchase.

Post-slavery peasant settlement was however severely constrained, as there was a virtual veto by planters on selling land to former slaves. In this context, the Baptist Church played a major role in facilitating the establishment of peasant communities (which also served as captive

[7]Stewart's wording focuses on male slaves. However, despite this gender bias, his statement that 'each slave' had customary land rights indicates full female, as well as male, participation in this customary system (Besson 1994d). For evidence of similar customary land rights among both female and male slaves throughout the Caribbean region see note 27 below.

congregations), by buying and subdividing land for resale to the ex-slaves. Such land settlements were especially prominent in Trelawny, under the sponsorship of Knibb, and by 1845 the parish had 23 free villages (Paget 1964:51; Besson 1984b). The ex-slaves' plots of land were, however, small, often providing only a house-spot and a bargaining position for wages while continuing to work on the plantations.

Within this context, the ex-slave settlers of Martha Brae created inalienable 'family land' in order to transmit scarce freehold rights to all descendants in perpetuity, regardless of gender, birth order, residence or legitimacy. This creole institution,[8] which maximised land rights and kinship lines among the descendants of legally landless and kinless chattel slaves, transformed West and Central African unilineal landholding, and British West Indian primogeniture, through a creolisation process par-

[8] I use this concept in the sense that it is widely used in the social sciences, namely, to refer to 'forms of standardised action or behaviour linked to a set of complex and interdependent norms and roles and applying to a relatively large proportion of persons within a society or territory' (Seymour-Smith 1986:153). My usage is also consistent with that of Mintz and Price, who define 'institution' (in the context of Caribbean culture-building) 'as any regular or orderly social interaction that acquires a normative character, and can hence be employed to meet recurrent needs. Thus broadly defined, a particular form of marriage, a particular religious cult, a particular pattern for establishing friendships, a particular economic relationship that is normative and recurrent - all would be examples of institutions' (1992:23). Carnegie (1987) mistakenly assumed that my usage of 'institution' supported M.G. Smith's (1965) plural society theory and Clarke's (1953) conflict approach to land tenure - despite my own critique of these perspectives (predating and extending Carnegie's analysis), which shows the complex ways in which family land articulates with other small-scale tenures and with the legal code (Besson 1974, Chapters 4 and 7, 1984a:76 n7, 1987a:38 n3, 1987b, 1988). Espeut (1992) and Crichlow (1994) unquestioningly follow Carnegie's assumption, and compound this by a selective consideration of our dialogue. Crichlow (p. 93) further adds to the confusion by labeling M.G. Smith, Clarke and myself as sharing an 'institutional-structural approach' - although I use both social structural and social organisational perspectives (cf. Trouillot 1989:324). The fact that 'institution' is also used in functionalist theory (which M.G. Smith vigorously opposed), where 'the concept of institution is linked to that of human needs' (Seymour-Smith 1986:153), underlines the error of Carnegie's assumption. (This should not be taken to mean that I support the functionalist school; see e.g. Besson 1993, where I set aside the pluralist-functionalist debate). My point is further underlined by Trouillot's perceptive observation (1989:324), in his review of the Carnegie-Besson 'debate' instigated by Carnegie (1987), that '[T]he problem is in part terminological: what constitutes an institution?' Trouillot rightly suggests that both myself and Carnegie are "trying to perfect what I would call a 'historical-processual'" model (though I am not sure we need one more label), along the lines established by Mintz' (ibid.; cf. Besson 1987b, in which I attempted to defuse the 'debate'). Moreover, as Carnegie, Espeut and Crichlow all use the concept of 'family land', they are also using an institutional approach.

alleling the transformation of the planter town. The unrestricted family land system consolidated the cognatic system of descent and land transmission created by the proto-peasant slaves (Besson 1984a:58-60, 1987b:103-4, 1992c:199-200).[9]

In the twentieth century, Trelawny's plantation economy was consolidated and transformed through corporate capitalism. The parish's fertile land is now engrossed by two sugar-cane *centrals* and several *properties* or large farms, replacing the former 100 slave estates. With this continuing land monopoly, the Old Families of Martha Brae continue to pass on miniscule family land estates, measured in square chains and reinforced by oral tradition. This oral tradition, currently transmitted by elderly grandchildren and great-grandchildren of ex-slaves, provided further insight into: the flight from the estates; the transformation of the colonial town; the role of the Baptist Church in land purchase; the ex-slaves' creation of family land; the retention of family land by contemporary villagers; and the role of oral history for people without written history. In addition, the Jamaican Creole language of this oral tradition further reflects the culture-building of the slaves and their descendants. Selected

[9] A contrast with legal freeholds in Jamaica highlights the features of family land. Legal freeholds, introduced to Jamaica by colonial rule, often comprise extensive tracts of land. Legal freeholds are private property, alienable, marketable in the capitalist economy, validated by legal documents, and acquired through purchase, deed of gift, or testate inheritance. As elsewhere in the British Caribbean, intestacy was traditionally defined on the basis of legitimacy, male precedence, primogeniture, and legal marriage. Houses on legal freehold land are part of the real estate, and land use is governed by the capitalist values of maximising profits and production. The customary family land system differs in all respects. Generally small in size (often only a few square chains), family land should not be sold and is regarded as the inalienable corporate estate of the family line. Rights to family land are essentially validated through oral tradition and, while initially acquired through purchase, are customarily transmitted through intestacy. Such intestate inheritance is based on unrestricted cognatic descent, whereby all children and their descendants are considered co-heirs regardless of gender, birth order, residence or legitimacy; marriage is not regarded as a basis for inheritance. Houses are distinguished from family land and considered movable property, and may be either individually or jointly owned. The use of family land is not governed by the values of capitalist monoculture but by a complex of economic and symbolic values forged among the peasantry and proto-peasantry. Family land is the spatial dimension of the family line, reflecting its continuity and identity, and provides inalienable freehold rights, house-sites, a spot for a kitchen garden, a place for absentees to return to in time of need and, where land availability and state regulations allow, a family burial ground. In addition to anthropological analysis, this customary kin-based tenure is identified among the peasantry by their own concept of 'family land' (Besson 1987b:118, 1988:44). This is not to say (with reference to the Carnegie-Espeut-Crichlow triad) that either the peasantry or myself are unaware that family land co-exists with other small-scale tenures and interacts with the legal code (see note 8 above).

extracts from the oral account of Mr. T. (born around 1903), the grandson of emancipated slaves from Irving Tower plantation and an 'older head' of one of Martha Brae's Old Families, illustrates these themes:

> 'All the districts [villages] generally in Jamaica, they are excerpts from slavery; handing down from slavery. The slaves were here working on the farms [plantations], and when they get freedom, you see, you have little districts here, districts there: Granville, Martha Brae, Bounty Hall, Rock, Perth Town, Daniel Town [free villages in Trelawny]. So you have all the little districts around [and] those older slaves go there and they produce children ...
>
> Well, you see, [in the case of] Martha Brae, the slaves were occupying over Irving Tower. That's the property over there, Irving Tower. Well, when they get their freedom now, they launch from out there to Martha Brae. So, if you notice it now, some of the people here in Martha Brae, is acquire them acquire [inherited land] from those who first got it ...
>
> Most of the history of the Black people don't come in big logbook. They keep it themselves, and grandparents told their children and grandchildren. And my grandparents told me that the Martha Brae lands were acquired by the Church. The Baptists got the land and then dispatched it to their members. And this also happened in Martha Brae. And there was a school and prayer house. Many of the children here went to school there, and Sunday school also.
>
> Well, my [paternal] grandfather was in the slave days. Him was an old man before him die, but him touch a little of the slavery. Because he said he was over Irving Tower there, that him used to live there when him get the place [land] to buy out here [in Martha Brae]. He bought it, you see, after abolition of slavery – Apprenticeship. There was an apprenticeship for the slaves. So they get allotted lands for them. That's why you find these little districts all over Jamaica.
>
> Well, my grandfather he bought the piece of land that I am living on now ... Well, my grandfather said the land should not be sold. It is for his heritage going down. It must go from children to grandchildren, right down the line...
>
> It is such a state now, that the district [Martha Brae] is surrounded by the properties still. So when the property want workers, they just notify the district and the workers come. The majority of the [provision] grounds that you have now, the land belong to the properties still ...

> Many people here don't have a square of land. Lack of land space – the people is like you put a pig in a kraal. That's just how plenty a the poor people live. Just like a pig in a kraal.'

After the death of Mr. T.'s generation, the family land estate was transmitted to the fourth and fifth descending generations of the emancipated slave.

Based on a combination of such oral tradition with historical research and long-term anthropological fieldwork, Martha Brae's Afro-Caribbean cultural history documents the evolution of the peasant economy and community, maintained on some 50 acres of marginal land hemmed in by plantations. The themes of family lines and family estates form the central threads of this 'new' history. The family land system articulates with other small-scale tenures (e.g. 'bought land', 'rent land', 'free land', 'captured land' and 'landless farms') and with the Jamaican legal code, thus challenging M.G. Smith's 'plural society' model of Caribbean land tenure systems (M.G. Smith 1965; Besson 1974: Chapters 4 and 7, 1984a:58, 76 n7, 1987a:38 n3, 1987b, 1988:42).[10] Villagers continue to create new family land whenever possible, but land acquisition remains severely constrained and increasing land scarcity has spawned the satellite squatter settlement of 'Zion' on government-owned land outside Martha Brae. Martha Brae's multiple land tenure complex is linked to a tripartite pattern of land use on house-yard, provision-ground and 'mountain', originating in plantation slavery and perpetuated by land monopoly (Mintz 1989:180-213, 225-50; Higman 1988:261-76).[11] Crops are produced for subsistence, for peasant marketing in Falmouth, and for the world economy. The Trelawny peasantry has also expanded the Falmouth market through informal import higglering, from elsewhere in the region and from the mainland Americas. Occupational multiplicity, incorporating wage-labour, tourism and migration, further elaborates and differentiates Martha Brae's peasant economy. A Friendly Society provides mutual aid for sickness and burial, and integrates the community with other villages in the parish and the island through a network of reciprocity.

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[10]Cf. notes 8 and 9 above.

[11]In addition to the dichotomy between Caribbean house-yard and provision-ground established by Mintz, originating in the villages and hilly backlands of slave plantations, Higman identifies eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Jamaican food production as having taken place on 'separate units of land called mountains', further into the mountainous interior (1988:261). He states that this 'system of separated "mountain" ' provision-grounds was particularly common in the western parishes' including Trelawny, and further notes that in this sugarcane-dominated parish such provision-grounds could be as distant as twenty miles from the yard (ibid.:265, 266).

While the Martha Brae villagers are still Baptist in formal faith, the Baptist Church co-exists with Revival-Zion cosmology, which evolved in the post-emancipation period from Native Baptist Christianity. The Revival world view, which continues to perceive links between the living and an active spirit-world, including ancestral kin, is institutionalised in Revival churches. Revival is reflected in family land transmission and elaborate mortuary ritual placing the dead in the village cemetery, which has replaced the yard burial pattern of the proto-peasantry and the immediate post-emancipation period. The Rastafarian movement, rooted in an Ethiopian ideology which developed on the slave plantations, and catalysed in the twentieth century by Garveyism in Jamaica and the crowning of Ras Tafari in Ethiopia, further elaborates the creole religious scene (Besson 1994a).

Creolisation is also manifested in consanguinity and affinity. Bilateral kinship networks and a dynamic 'complex' conjugal system, based on exogamous serial polygamy, interrelate with the unrestricted cognatic descent and landholding corporations. These overlapping corporations integrate the community with other Trelawny villages, and enable national and international circulatory migration. Conjugality and bilateral kinship likewise extend beyond the village. The kinship and marriage system maximises all relations of kinship, descent, conjugality and affinity as dimensions of community and bases of identity. This creole system is reflected in a Hawaiianised Eskimo kinship terminology, further modified by the differentiation of siblings and half-siblings.[12] Martha Brae's post-slavery cultural history therefore reflects the transformation not only of the institutions of the European planter class, but also of ancestral African societies and imposed colonial nonconformist Baptist styles of life.

The Peasant Communities of West-Central Jamaica

Martha Brae's post-slavery development is part of the wider cultural history of the Jamaican peasantry, especially the peasant communities elsewhere in Trelawny and the adjoining parish of St. Elizabeth; areas of plantation consolidation and reactive peasantisation. The evolution of these communities remains largely unrecorded, as in the case of post-emancipation Martha Brae. This second section outlines 'the origins and history' of six other peasant communities in west-central Jamaica and 'the similarities and differences among them' (Mintz 1989:230). As with post-slavery Martha Brae, these hidden histories have been uncovered through a combination of historical research, anthropological fieldwork and the vil-

[12]For a fuller discussion of this kinship terminology see Besson 1994d.

lagers' oral traditions. These oral histories, like those of Martha Brae, reach back to the post-emancipation period and in some cases well beyond: to the slavery past, to the 'First-Time Maroons', to the Middle Passage of the Atlantic slave trade, and to the 'ship-mate' fictive kinship bond which formed the atom of African-American slave society (Mintz and Price 1992:43; Besson 1994d).

Granville.

Comparative research was first extended to Granville, just one mile southwest of Martha Brae (Besson 1984b:10-13). Granville's peasant economy and society are similar to those of Martha Brae (and of the other Trelawny villages), and the inhabitants of Martha Brae and Granville are closely linked by kinship and affinity. Historical sources, such as Baptist records, provided a base-line for reconstructing Granville's cultural history. The community was founded as a free village in 1845 by the Baptist missionary William Knibb, who named the settlement after the English abolitionist Granville Sharpe. The village was established on about 90 acres of mountainous land (a former livestock pen) to absorb ex-slaves, in the flight from the estates, from the nearby plantations of Green Park, Merrywood and Maxfield, as well as from Holland estate bordering Martha Brae; and 'in order that a portion of the people might be near enough to ensure a good congregation at the parent chapel' in Falmouth (Underhill 1862:370). The establishment of Granville, through a Baptist freehold land settlement, was therefore more clear-cut than post-slavery Martha Brae, which initially evolved through squatting on the site of the former colonial town.

Fieldwork in Granville identified a population of around 600 persons, in 120 households, precariously established on small plots of land, each only a few square chains in size. As in Martha Brae, the core of this population are Old Families descended from ex-slave settlers of the free village and transmitting family land. These unrestricted landholding corporations overlap both within the village and with Old Families in Martha Brae. Settlement in Granville is, however, more dispersed than in Martha Brae, which retains the urban layout of the colonial town; and while Martha Brae now has a cemetery, Granville still buries in the yard, as was the custom in Martha Brae in the immediate aftermath of emancipation. Granville's landscape is therefore charted by graves and tombs of varying style and age, reflecting continuity and change within the village and embedding its kinship lines.

Oral tradition embroiders these themes in Granville's hidden history. Villagers tell of the establishment of Granville by William Knibb, and some oral histories are reinforced by an original land deed from Knibb. Oral tradition details the subdivision of the Granville lands by Knibb's

'land butcher' or surveyor, a mulatto and probably a Baptist class leader, whose descendants (some of whom are migrants in England) have the most extensive and fertile landholdings in contemporary Granville. Villagers say that the settlement was originally known as 'Grumble Pen', due to disputes in the post-slavery struggle for land. This claim assumed added significance in the light of the dual naming pattern that I subsequently identified in some other Trelawny villages, and which was found by Mintz in the Baptist free village of Sturge Town/Birmingham in the neighbouring parish of St. Ann (Mintz 1989:160-62, 168; Besson 1984b). Villagers also recounted overlapping histories of the Old Families and their family land. These histories included accounts of emancipation celebrations by the freed slaves and the words of their 'freedom songs'.

Refuge.

Historical research also uncovered the origin of Refuge, seven miles east of Martha Brae (Besson 1984b:13-15). Like Granville, Refuge was a free village established by William Knibb on about 90 acres of hilly land. Knibb's speech to the Baptist Missionary Society in England in 1842 outlined the founding of the village, with a chapel and a school. The church's cornerstone bears the date 1838, the year of full emancipation. Refuge was originally named Wilberforce after the abolitionist, and for its first four years the village had the two names Wilberforce-Refuge, like Granville-Grumble Pen. In Refuge, however, the colloquial name took hold by 1842, underlining the village's role as a refuge for ex-slaves in the flight from nearby sugar estates such as Oxford, Etingdon and Stewart Castle. Oxford plantation, which was owned by the English Barrett family during slavery, still encompasses Refuge. In the mid-twentieth century Oxford was incorporated into the Trelawny Estates central controlled by Seagram's, the world's largest alcohol multi-national. In the 1970s, this central was nationalised and, as National Sugar (Long Pond), now manufactures Jamaican 'Gold Label' rum. Fieldwork identified a population of over 400 persons in Refuge, in 80 households, many of whom are descended from the ex-slave settlers as in Martha Brae and Granville. As in those two villages, overlapping cognatic corporations transmit family land created by ex-slaves. Dispersed settlement and yard burial patterns more closely resemble Granville than Martha Brae. Oral tradition in Refuge reaches further back than in those two communities: beyond the post-emancipation era to the daily suffering of slavery, and to the Atlantic slave-trade and the shipmate bond.

Kettering.

Kettering village is three miles further east than Refuge and adjoins the town of Duncans (Besson 1984b:15-16). Like Granville and Refuge, Ket-

tering was founded as a Baptist free village by William Knibb. The settlement was established in 1841, on the hilly land of a former pimento estate, and was named after Knibb's Northhamptonshire home-town. Knibb himself resided there, where Baptist ex-slaves built him a home. Historical records show that the subdivided land was sold to former slaves, from plantations such as Braco, and that 278 persons settled in 80 households. Kettering's contemporary population has grown to about 800 persons, roughly equivalent to Martha Brae's population but on a more dispersed land base.[13] As in the previous three villages, genealogies showed that the Kettering villagers are mainly descended from freed slaves who created and transmitted family land. Like Refuge, oral tradition reaches beyond the post-emancipation era to the slavery past: for example, to an ancestress slave-child in a plantation 'hogmeat gang'.[14] Burial patterns in Kettering vary yet again. The more rural half of Kettering still buries in the yard; while the more urban half of the village is now required, by urban planning, to inter in the Duncans cemetery.

Alps.

The fifth Trelawny village studied was Alps, whose location differs from that of the previous four communities (Besson 1984b:17-18). While the other four villages are on the hilly margins of the coastal plantations, Alps is further inland in the northern foothills of the Cockpit Country Mountains. My archival research established that Alps was Trelawny's first free village, originally named New Birmingham. This village, established like Refuge in the year of full emancipation, 1838, was (with Sligoville in St. Catherine Parish) one of Jamaica's first two Baptist villages; and, with Sligoville, provided the model for the island's free village system. New Birmingham was founded by the Baptist missionary Benjamin Dexter, under the sponsorship of Knibb, on a former coffee estate, The Alps, and named after the abolitionist Joseph Sturge's Birmingham home-town. Like Granville-Grumble Pen and Wilberforce-Refuge in Trelawny, and Sturge Town-Birmingham in St. Ann, New Birmingham-Alps had two names; and, as in the case of Refuge, the colloquial name took hold.

Interviews uncovered overlapping corporations in Alps descended from ex-slaves and transmitting family land, as in the other Trelawny vil-

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[13]My research in Kettering focused on approximately half the population - about 400 persons in some 80 households.

[14]As Patterson (1967:59) has noted, field slaves on Jamaican plantations were divided into at least three gangs, with four gangs on very large plantations such as Green Park in Trelawny. The third or fourth gang was the hogmeat gang, comprised of children between the ages of around four years and ten years, whose minor tasks included 'collecting food for the hogs'.

lages; and Alps has the most pronounced and elaborate family land burial grounds of these communities. One such family cemetery contained 34 cairns and tombs dating back to the early post-emancipation era, which oral tradition contrasts with the unmarked graves of 150 'invisible' slave ancestors in the former plantation 'cholera ground'.

Accompong.

Beyond Trelawny's border, in the precipitous forested southern reaches of the Cockpit Country Mountains in St. Elizabeth, is the Maroon community of Accompong descended from rebel slaves. Accompong is the only surviving village of the Jamaican Leeward Maroon polity and is the oldest persisting post-treaty corporate Maroon community in the Americas. The village was consolidated over two hundred and fifty years ago, after Jamaica's First Maroon War (1725-39), by a treaty between Colonel Cudjoe, the Leeward Maroon leader, and the British colonial government, forced to sue for peace. This treaty of March 1739 included the Maroons of Trelawny Town, who were subsequently betrayed and deported by the colonial regime after the Second Maroon War of 1795-96. The Leeward treaty predates the June 1739 treaty of the Windward Maroons of eastern Jamaica, and the treaties between the Suriname Maroons and the Dutch in the 1760s.

Aspects of Leeward and Windward Maroon history have been recorded from a Eurocentric viewpoint, insofar as they impinge on British colonial history (cf. Bilby 1984b:9-21). Dimensions of Jamaican Maroon social and cultural history have also been uncovered from an African-American Maroon perspective. Campbell (1990) has documented 'a history of resistance, collaboration and betrayal' among the Jamaican Maroons up to the Second Maroon War; while Kopytoff (1976a, 1976b, 1978, 1979, 1987) has reconstructed Jamaican Maroon ethnohistory up to the 1970s. Bilby (1981, 1984a, 1984b) has analysed ritual, identity, and oral history among the Windward Maroons, and Zips (e.g. 1993) has studied religion and resistance in Accompong.[15] However, as Palmié has noted, 'the evolution of the Jamaican Maroon kinship system has, unfortunately, not received sufficient attention' (1992:15 n11). This neglect has been especially marked regarding the relationship between kinship, community and land.

My own recent research in Accompong has focused on land, kinship and community, and has been essentially comparative across the Maroon/non-

[15]In addition, Barker and Spence (1988) have undertaken a geographical study of Accompong Maroon agriculture and Chris de Beet is studying the demography of Accompong.

Maroon divide.[16] In three earlier papers I have explored in greater detail Maroon and non-Maroon resistance and identity in the peasant communities of west-central Jamaica, the comparative creolisation of slave kinship in these communities, and Accompong's sacred landscape as a variant on wider Caribbean themes (Besson 1994b, 1994d, 1994f). Here I outline 'the similarities and differences' (Mintz 1989:230) between Accompong and the non-Maroon communities. In the Trelawny villages, as noted earlier, the core of land is held by Old Families as family land, created by emancipated slaves in Baptist-founded settlements; and such family land interrelates with other small-scale tenures and with the Jamaican legal code (cf. Besson 1974, 1984a, 1987b, 1988). The Accompong Maroons, by contrast, hold 1,500 acres of common land, in a precipitous mountain reservation, granted by the treaty of March 1739. However, since the Maroons' Allotment Act of 1842, four years after emancipation, the colonial government, and subsequently the Jamaican state, has attempted to deprive the Maroons of their status and common land. The firmest resistance to these attempts has come from Accompong, and Kopytoff (1979) has documented border and tax disputes up to the 1970s. Such disputes continued throughout my fieldwork up to 1994.

In the face of these external pressures to undermine the commons, the Accompong Maroons have created creole land tenure and kinship systems which are still evolving. Common land remains the central basis of Maroon economy, society and corporate identity. This identity has, however, been reinforced by overlapping cognatic family lines, similar in some respects to the Trelawny Old Families, but claiming descent from the First-Time Maroons who won the war and established the Accompong community.[17] Bilateral kinship networks further link these family lines, as in Trelawny, but Accompong's corporate community is additionally strengthened by tendencies towards Maroon endogamy and cousin conjugality. This kinship and marriage system is reflected in the Maroon sayings 'We are all one family' and 'We are Royal Family', and is symbolised in the sacred Kindah Tree with its sign proclaiming 'We are Family'. This tree is the central symbol of the annual Myal ritual, handed down over more than two hundred and fifty years from the rebel

[16]My research in Accompong has also been diachronic in that it was based on recurrent fieldwork over the fourteen-year period 1979-93, with visits in 1979, 1989, 1991 and 1993. This enabled me to identify the emerging pattern of yard burial discussed at a later point in this article.

[17]As Kopytoff (1979:52) has noted, 'When Maroons today speak of the "First-Time Maroons", they mean not the first escapees from the plantations, but the people who won them the treaties, some eighty years after the Maroons had begun to collect in the interior of Jamaica'.

plantation slaves, despite the Scottish Presbyterian Church established in Accompong in the late nineteenth century.

Around the Kindah Tree are ancestral burial grounds marked by cairns and boulders. Oral history states that these are the graves of First-Time Coromantee and 'Congo' Maroons and their immediate descendants. Oral tradition is underwritten by ethnohistorical evidence of such African ethnicity in early Jamaican Maroon society.[18] Accompong's African ancestral burial grounds have, however, long been complemented by the Presbyterian Church cemetery, which has become a symbol of the corporate creole community.

Within this wider context of corporate identity and common land, cognatic landholding corporations, with similarities to those of the Trelawny villages, are emerging. For while common rights still typify the outer forest zone, usufructory rights to provision grounds in the intermediate zone, and to house-yards in the inner residential area, are being transmitted through cognation. This process of descent-based incorporation of portions of Maroon land is being reinforced by an emergent pattern of yard burial. While this interment custom has long typified some Trelawny villages, it runs counter to Maroon tradition. This is underlined by the indignation yard burial has aroused among conventional Maroons.

Yet, paradoxically, this new interment pattern is an aspect of the creolisation process which has enabled the Accompong community to survive. A creolisation strategy was endorsed by the Leeward Maroon leader Colonel Cudjoe, who was a Creole Maroon, and who stipulated that his followers should speak Jamaican Creole English rather than the languages of Africa (Kopytoff 1976b:42, 45). From this perspective, the evolving landholding corporations and yard burial can be seen as further adaptations to preserve the Maroon community, against increasing external pressure, by embedding its kinship lines.

Accompong's corporate identity is also paradoxically maintained through relations beyond the Maroon community, especially with the nearest non-Maroon village, Aberdeen in St. Elizabeth, the seventh community studied.

Aberdeen.

Aberdeen village, which now comprises two sections, Upper and Lower Aberdeen, is on the former Aberdeen slave plantation, founded in the

[18]Coromantees and their descendants dominated the Leeward Maroons in the eighteenth century, and 'Congo' runaways settled 'deep in the western woods' after the Leeward treaty. Colonel Cudjoe, who forged the treaty, was a Creole Maroon but had a Coromantee father. He also had a Coromantee name, as did other Leeward Maroon leaders, namely, Quaco, Cuffee and Accompong (Kopytoff 1976b:38, 40, 42).

eighteenth century by Alexander Forbes of Scotland's Aberdeen. The older section of the village, Upper Aberdeen, is in the foothills of the Aberdeen Mountains (on Accompong's southern horizon), which were the backlands of the slave plantation. Accompong's oral history tells of alliances between the First-Time Maroons and Aberdeen plantation slaves, established through the backlands of the estate. These alliances are said to have enabled the Maroons to make plantation livestock-raids.

Accompong Maroons underline their independence from the Jamaican state by repeatedly referring to the exemption of the commons from taxation, and by contrasting this with the Aberdeen villagers who have to pay tax on parcelled land. Despite this differential status and the tendency towards Maroon endogamy, Accompong is linked to Aberdeen by conjugality, bilateral kinship and affinity.

With the consolidation of the plantation system and the development of the multinational banana industry in Jamaica after emancipation (Satchell 1990), Aberdeen sugar plantation became a banana estate. Aberdeen estate has now been transformed into a government land settlement, which has enabled Aberdeen village to expand reinforcing the distinction between Upper and Lower Aberdeen. However, Aberdeen village and Accompong remain encompassed by plantations, notably by Appleton Estates, manufacturers of Appleton Jamaica Rum. In the face of this persisting land monopoly, unrestricted descent and landholding corporations have been a continuous theme in Upper Aberdeen. This parallel with the Trelawny villages is reflected in extensive family land burial grounds, as in Granville, Alps and Refuge. Aberdeen's family land system has undoubtedly contributed to the creolisation of burial patterns in Accompong. In Aberdeen itself, family land burial grounds are the central symbol of the community's cultural history.

Caribbean Customary Tenures and Hidden Histories

The two preceding sections show that the hidden histories of all seven Jamaican peasant villages are embedded in their land, the core resource of the communities and the focus of their oral traditions. Similar customary tenures, based on kinship and community, can be identified throughout the Caribbean Region, especially in the non-Hispanic territories where post-slavery peasantries emerged. This third section analyses this 'aspect of rural life in the region as a whole' (Mintz 1989:203). I first synthesise, and then reinterpret, four aspects of these tenures, namely: their

widespread occurrence, their origins, their dynamics, and their implications for development.[19] I then consider the neglected gender dimension.

With respect to the distribution of these tenures, family land has been identified in several other Jamaican rural communities and, elsewhere in the Greater Antilles, in relation to the Haitian *lakou*. In the Lesser Antilles, family land has been reported for the British and Danish/American Virgin Islands of Tortola, Virgin Gorda, and St. John; the Commonwealth Leeward Islands of Nevis, Montserrat and Antigua; Dutch St. Eustatius; French Martinique; the Commonwealth Windward Islands of Dominica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, and Grenada; Carriacou and Bequia, in the Grenadines; and Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, and Providencia.[20]

In the more northern Bahamas, a similar tenure, 'generation property', interrelates with common land. On the coastlands of the Guianas, which comprise the southern margin of the Caribbean (socio-culturally defined, Mintz 1971a, 1989), cognatic land transmission co-exists with community land in Guyana and Suriname. Among the Maroons in the interior of Suriname and French Guiana, there are kin-based tenures based on matriliny. Among the Black Caribs of the Caribbean Coast of Central America, a cognatic system co-exists with common land, as in the Carib reservations of St. Vincent and Dominica. As outlined earlier, a similar pattern is emerging among the Jamaican Accompong Maroons. In the Leeward Island of Barbuda, cognatic land transmission typifies house-yards in the island's only village, while the rest of the island is regarded

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[19]For further discussion of these issues, including the question of the African heritage, the co-existence of family land with other small-scale tenures, and the interrelation of customary and legal tenurial principles, see Besson 1974, 1979, 1984a, 1984b, 1987a, 1987b, 1988, 1992c, 1994c, 1994d.

[20]Reports of family land in Jamaica and Haiti have included Clarke (1953, 1966) and Larose (1975) respectively. For the Virgin Islands, Olwig (1985) has provided rich material on St. John; Frank McGlynn has studied family land in Tortola (personal communication, 1988); and I have ascertained that this tenure exists in Virgin Gorda. For the Leewards, see Philpott (1973) and Olwig (1993) on Montserrat and Nevis; while I have identified family land in Antigua. In the Windwards and Grenadines, Van den Bor (1979:131) has reported 'succession-ground' on St. Eustatius; Horowitz (1967:29-30, 45-50) has provided evidence of family land in Martinique; as has Trouillot (1988:252) for Dominica, D.C.E. Mathurin (1967) for St. Lucia, Rubenstein (1987) for St. Vincent, Brierley (1974:90-91) for Grenada, M.G. Smith (1965) for Carriacou, and N. Price (1988:117) for Bequia. I have also identified this tenure in Dominica. Greenfield (1960) has reported family land for Barbados, Wilson (1973:53-57) for Providencia, and Littlewood (1993:177) for Trinidad, while I have found this tenure in both Trinidad and Tobago. For more extensive reviews of the sources providing evidence of family land throughout the region, see Besson 1984a:77 n16, 1987a:17, 1992c:211 n3, 1994c.

as common land. Within the Barbudan commons, rights to trees and provision grounds are based on cognation, as in Accompong.[21]

The interpretation of the origins of such customary tenures by anthropologists has been piecemeal and contentious, and has tended towards cultural survival explanations. Edith Clarke (1953, 1966), in her pioneering study, attributed Jamaican family land to the African heritage of the Ashanti slaves. Greenfield (1960) later argued that Barbadian family land derived from English entailment. In Martinique, St. Lucia, and Haiti, family land has been explained as a survival from the French Napoleonic code (Horowitz 1967:29-30; Finkel 1971:299; Mintz 1989:274); while R.T. Smith recently defended his 1950s thesis that Guyanese 'children's property' derives from Roman-Dutch colonial law (1955, 1990).[22] In the 1980s and 1990s, Africanist retention explanations have been reactivated by Carnegie (1987) and Espeut (1992) for Jamaican family land, by Barker and Spence (1988) for the Accompong Maroon commons, and by Craton (1987) for the Bahamaian case. Wilson (1973:56) argued that the Providencian system derived from Jamaica. M.G. Smith (1965) analysed family land in Carriacou as an adaptation to the island's demographic and social structure, and Berleant-Schiller (1987) contended that the Barbudan commons are unique.

The dynamics of the kin-based tenures have been analysed in an equally inconsistent and piecemeal fashion. Clarke (1953, 1966), writing two years before Goodenough's (1955) rethinking of kinship systems based on Malayo-Polynesian data, presented evidence of unrestricted cognatic descent and landholding corporations in Jamaica, but referred to these as kindreds. Solien (1959), influenced by Goodenough, argued that restricted nonunilineal descent groups typified the Black Caribs and Clarke's Jamaican data. Davenport (1961a, 1961b) described Jamaican landholding kin groups as localised joint families, but was unable to conclusively identify restricting factors (as had also been the case with Solien's reinterpretation of Clarke's data). Greenfield (1960) analysed the Barbadian system as unrestricted. Otterbein (1964), on the basis of Clarke's and Greenfield's data and his own Bahamian study, argued that land transmis-

[21]See e.g. Craton (1987) on the Bahamas, R.T. Smith (1955, 1990) on Guyana, Mintz and Price (1992:68-71) on the Para region of Suriname and the Saramaka Maroons, Bilby (1989:146) on the Aluku Maroons of French Guiana, Solien (1959) on the Black Caribs, and Gullick (1976:252) and Honychurch (1991:18-19) on the Caribs of St. Vincent and Dominica. The analysis of the Barbudan case combines data from Berleant-Schiller (e.g. 1987), Lowenthal and Clarke (e.g. 1979), and Besson (e.g. 1987a:38-40 n5); my reinterpretation being further based on a visit to Barbuda in 1993. For further discussion of these Caribbean customary tenures see Besson 1992c, 1994c, 1994d.

[22]For my reply to R.T. Smith (1990) see Besson 1994c note 4.

sion was unrestricted in the Bahamas, Barbados and post-emancipation Jamaica, but had become restricted in Jamaica due to increased land scarcity. His analysis was inconsistent, since Barbados has the region's highest population density. Olwig (1985) and R.T. Smith (1988) presented evidence of ancestor-focused unrestricted landholding corporations in St. John, Jamaica and Guyana, but analysed only ego-focused bilateral kinship systems.

Mintz and Price (1992:68-70) identified overlapping non-unilineal ancestral ritual groups among the coastal plantation slaves of Suriname but concluded that, as such non-exclusive groups could not function in relation to land, the plantation communities themselves became landholding corporations after emancipation. Yet they referred to nonunilineal landholding groups in Jamaica, but designated similar corporations in Haiti as groups of patrikin (ibid.:75). Larose (1975) later analysed the Haitian *lakou* as based on cognatic descent. M.G. Smith focused on 'patrilineal bloods' in Carriacou, but presented evidence of a cognatic system of land transmission (1962:74, 296). Apart from the so-called 'matrifocal family', Caribbean kin groups have seldom been mentioned in the wider anthropological literature. However, Murdock (1960:6) typified the Jamaican kinship system as bilateral/Eskimo, lacking descent groups; while Fox (1967:120) observed that some West Indians are patrilineal. Not surprisingly, Mintz and Price have referred to the unsolved mysteries of Caribbean kin-based land transmission systems (Mintz 1989:242; Mintz and Price 1992:75).

The perception of Caribbean customary tenures by lawyers, administrators and developers has tended to be negative. Clarke noted that family land was unrecognised by the law in Jamaica (1953:116, 1966:66). D.C.E. Mathurin described family land in St. Lucia as 'an unfavourable system of land tenure' which was 'stifling agricultural development' (1967:1, 2). Lowenthal observed that, in West Indian societies, '[L]ocal authorities condemn "family land" ' tenure as uneconomic, wasteful, a prime cause of soil exhaustion and erosion, an obstacle to agricultural modernization' (1972:104). Craton reported a tendency in the Bahamas towards the eradication of customary tenures, and a view of generation property 'as blocking development along "modern" lines' (1987:107). Espeut contended that in Jamaica 'the existence of family land is a hindrance to rural development in general and to agricultural development in particular', and that, '[I]f development planners do not take steps to deal with the problem of family land, then the scandal of land scarcity in the midst of idle land will remain a feature of rural Jamaica' (1992:80).[23] I have already referred to continuing government attempts to undermine

[23]For a critique of Espeut's approach see Besson 1994e.

Jamaican Maroon common tenure. In Barbuda, where common tenure had been criticised by unsuccessful colonial agricultural developers since emancipation, there have recently been more successful attempts by the Antiguan-Barbudan government to erode traditional tenure in the context of tourism (Berleant-Schiller 1978, 1987). This has included the mining of Barbuda's pink-shell sand for removal to Antigua.[24] In 1994, I was told of a similar attitude towards family land in Virgin Gorda in the context of tourism.

My own research in Jamaica and the Eastern Caribbean, combined with examination and synthesis of the regional literature, suggests alternative perspectives on all of the above dimensions of customary tenures.[25] First, their widespread distribution calls for regional analysis. A regional perspective on Caribbean societies and cultures has long been overlooked for, as Mintz has noted:

> 'It is a typically Caribbean fact that few students of the region even attempt to deal with more than one island, or one group of islands ... or, at best, one language-group ... Somewhat depressingly, each Caribbean-born scholar tends to concern himself [sic] almost exclusively with the island of his birth, thus fulfilling that fondest of European imperialist hopes for the region: that no Caribbean person ever develop a pan-Caribbean outlook ...' (1974:xii).

In the case of family land, these traditional tendencies have been reinforced by an aversion towards the development of a regional perspective on this kin-based tenurial system (Carnegie 1987; Crichlow 1994).[26] Secondly, Caribbean customary tenures rooted in kinship and community are not passive survivals from colonial and ancestral cultures, but represent dynamic culture-building by Caribbean peasantries themselves in response and resistance to colonialism, slavery, the plantation system, continued land monopoly through tourism, and Eurocentric legal codes.

Thirdly, this reinterpretation elucidates the dynamics of such customary tenures throughout the Caribbean. Unrestricted family land systems have been created at the heart of the plantation-peasant interface, and

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[24]During my visit to Barbuda in 1993, I was told of ongoing litigation regarding Antigua's control of Barbudan land.

[25]Cf. note 19 above.

[26]For example, in her critique of my approach, Crichlow focuses on family land in the 'Anglophone Caribbean' and on 'The Case of St. Lucia'. Apart from illustrating Mintz's points regarding a narrow focus on a specific territory and/or language-group, the fact that the small holders in the St. Lucian case study 'speak French Creole (patois) more easily than English' (Crichlow 1994:83) begs the question as to whether an 'anglophone' perspective is adequate. For a reply to Carnegie's critique see Besson 1987b; cf. notes 8 and 9 above.

where tourism reinforces land scarcity, to maximise freehold land rights and kinship lines among the descendants of legally landless and kinless chattel slaves. This is especially so in the Antilles, at the core of the region, including the free villages of Trelawny and the village of Aberdeen.[27] The African retention argument, which is the most plausible of the cultural survival theses, fails to account for the difference between West and Central African restricted unilineal landholding (e.g. Ashanti matrilineal land transmission) and these unrestricted cognatic Antillean systems (Besson 1984a:60-63, 1987b:106-08, 1992c:203, 212 n6).[28]

At the margins and frontiers of plantation society - in the Bahamas, the Caribbean Coast of Central America, the Guiana coastlands, and the Leeward Island of Barbuda (whose soil was unsuited to plantations) - the cognatic descent principle interweaves with more extensive common tenure, which likewise derives from Caribbean contexts. A similar pattern typifies the marginal Antillean reservations of the dispossessed Caribs in Dominica and St. Vincent, and the precipitous stronghold of the Jamaican Accompong Maroons.[29] Only in the mainland interiors of Suriname and French Guiana has there been sufficient land availability and the relative autonomy to retain or forge anew African-type matrilineal systems (cf. Besson 1994c, 1994d).

Fourthly, Caribbean customary tenures based on kinship and community should therefore be seen as adaptive systems of land tenure, use and

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[27] As in Jamaica, the bases of these unrestricted cognatic systems elsewhere in the Caribbean, especially in the Antilles, were the customary land rights among both male and female slaves. For evidence of such rights in the Danish West Indian island of St. John, in the British and French Windward Islands, and in the Leeward Islands see Olwig (1985:41, 49), Trouillot (1988:73-75), Marshall (1991:52-53, 60), Tomich (1991:80-81), and Gaspar (1992:146). The further consolidation of these customary rights among the slaves through burial of kin on such land is reported for Jamaica, St. John and Martinique.

[28] Thus in a discussion of Antillean subsistence cultivation, Berleant-Schiller and Pulsipher have noted that 'Family land is undoubtedly an Afro-American form of tenure that developed in the New World, as Besson (1984) [1984a] has ably argued, and is a characteristic part of the Antillean range of small plot tenure forms' (1986:16). Likewise, in his review of the Carnegie-Besson 'debate', instigated by Carnegie (1987), which I had attempted to defuse (Besson 1987b), Trouillot concludes that 'the only issue on which Carnegie and Besson really differ, in my view, is that of African retentions; my own position on this is closer to that of Besson' (1989:325 n2).

[29] Illustrations of the Caribbean derivation of such tenures are that: the Accompong Maroon commons derive from slave resistance and a colonial treaty (Kopytoff 1979; Besson 1994f); the Barbudan commons are based on a proto-peasant adaptation and the belief that the Codringtons willed the island to its inhabitants (Berleant-Schiller 1987:117; Besson 1987a:39 n5); and Carib reservations in St. Vincent derive from 'Grant Lands' from the colonial government in 1805 (Gullick 1976:252).

transmission, and as bases of sustainable development, in the face of continued land monopoly.[30] In some Caribbean societies, such as Jamaica and Barbados, the principles of family land have even recently transformed the legal code.[31] Such customary tenures are also repositories of hidden histories,[32] which need to be empowered and engendered.

The gender dimension in Caribbean peasant communities has not received the attention it deserves. In an attempt to redress this neglect and the traditional focus on the matrifocal household, Peter Wilson (1969, 1973) advanced the theory of 'reputation' and 'respectability'. He extrapolated, from the tiny island of Providencia, that men in anglophone Afro-Caribbean rural communities were the vanguard of a counter-culture of 'reputation', while women upheld colonial 'respectability' - historically rooted in the proximity of female slaves to the master class. As Trouillot (1992:26) noted, Wilson's analysis 'came close to becoming the master trope of Caribbean anthropology'. Wilson's influence has continued beyond Trouillot's review, as in Littlewood's distinguished monograph of the Earth People of Trinidad (1993).

In his analysis of reputation, Wilson included creole land tenure, kinship, religion (especially Rastafari) and oral culture, all of which he interpreted as male-oriented. However, in the peasant communities of west-central Jamaica, at the very heart of anglophone Caribbean society, women as well as men participate in all these dimensions of rural life and are therefore central to Caribbean culture-building and development

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[30]In the context of a less than rigorous portrayal of my views, Crichlow (1994:96 n17) states that I 'fault' the family land 'system's inefficiency in the use of "unrestricted cognatic descent" ', and aligns my views with those advanced e.g. by D.C.E. Mathurin (1967) - whose condemnation of family land I myself have earlier criticised. While 'not disputing the tendency towards "under-production" associated with family land' from a capitalist perspective (Besson 1984a:73), due to the unrestricted nature of descent and the symbolic aspects of family land tenure, I have repeatedly *defended* family land as an adaptive land use system and pointed out that it is land monopoly rather than the family land system *per se* that effectively inhibits agricultural development (see e.g. Besson 1984a:73, 1987a:37, 1988:48-50). For a related discussion of 'Galbraithian' and 'Zen' interpretations of 'under-production' see e.g. Sahlins 1972.

[31]This has included the abolition of primogeniture (1953, retrospective to 1937, in Jamaica), the 1976 Jamaican Status of Children Act and the 1981 Barbadian Family Law Act entitling 'illegitimate' children to intestate inheritance (Besson 1984a:76 n9, 1987b:111, 1988:55; Carnegie 1987:97 n3).

[32]Consistent with this thesis is the fact that the destruction of Carib society and culture by the colonial Conquest as related to me by the few surviving descendants of Caribs in Arima, Trinidad, in 1992, was portrayed through the theme of stolen land. Likewise, descendants of landless East Indian indentured plantation labourers in the Caroni area of Trinidad spoke to me, in 1992, of colonial trickery regarding betrayed promises of post-indenture land grants.

(Besson 1993).[33] I outline how kinship, ritual and oral tradition - which are all closely linked with land - and land rights themselves, are 'experienced and structured through gender' (Moore 1988:9) in these communities, which are located in a post-colonial class-race stratified anglophone Caribbean society.

In all seven villages the kinship and marriage systems are based on gender complementarity, reflected in bilateral kinship, unrestricted cognation, and conjugality based on both serial polygyny and serial polyandry. While the Maroons have additional tendancies towards endogamy and cousin-conjugality, these do not detract from the autonomy of either women or men. In the descent system, kinship articulates with land. Wilson argued that cognatic descent in Providencia was only an ideology, and that landholding was controlled by men. However, the unrestricted family land systems in the Jamaican non-Maroon communities incorporate women as well as men, and both genders create and transmit family land. In Accompong, common land rights, which form the wider context of the emergent cognatic corporations, are held and transmitted by women and men.

In ritual, men and women have more gender-specific roles. In Accompong, this is reflected in the ancestral Myal ritual, which charts a sacred landscape at the heart of common land. The ritual feast at the Kindah Grove is hedged by taboos and rules, ordering communication with the First-Time Maroons. Pigs and fowls are sacrificed and 'pot food' is cooked, especially by male members of a specific family line, and 'shop food' is tabooed. This feast represents the traditional Maroon economy, which was based on hunting wild pigs, and on domesticating provision grounds and yards. The gender and colour of the animals and ground provisions at the feast are also specified. Male pigs and fowls are sacrificed, and even the yams are male; while the hogs and cocks are black and white. This gender-specific and colour-coded food symbolises the male warriors on both sides of the Cockpit War, and the conflict in the colour-class colonial system encompassing the plantation owners and their rebel slaves. The sacrifices are made especially to the male warrior-ancestors, Colonel Cudjoe and his Captains, Quaco, Cuffee, Johnny and Accompong, who are said to be buried at two further sacred groves. The Maroons' ritual return from these groves to Kindah, armed with sticks and

[33]My 1993 article provides a comprehensive critical review of Wilson's thesis in the light of data from the Jamaican village of Martha Brae and from elsewhere in the island and the region.

battle-camouflaged with cocoon-vines,[34] further highlights the maleness of the warrior-heroes.

Complementing this male theme is the female focus of the Myal Dance or 'Play'. This is performed around the Kindah Tree and culminates in reputed spirit possession, by male warrior-heroes, of living female Maroons. Possession is enacted directly beneath the flourishing Kindah Tree, with its sign proclaiming 'We are Family'. The Myal Dance underlines the central role of women in reproducing the Leeward Maroon polity. The symbol of the Kindah Tree incorporates the generational links, and the complementary male and female principles, perpetuating the corporate Maroon community and embedded in its kinship and marriage system.

In the non-Maroon communities, while men are dominant in Rastafari (as is also the case in Accompong), women are the vanguard of the Revival-Zion rituals at the heart of these peasant cultures of resistance, though men play complementary roles (Besson 1994a). Since Revival is reflected in mortuary ritual, and in family land transmission and burial grounds, this further underlines the significance of women in landholding. Regarding the gender dimension in oral culture, I have documented in detail elsewhere the significance of women as well as men in the oral performance of Revival rituals in Martha Brae and in the competition for reputation in the factions that typify Revival Churches - both within that community, and between Martha Brae and Granville (Besson 1993).

Both genders also transmit the oral history that forms a central aspect of oral culture in the Jamaican villages, and there are ancestress-heroines as well as ancestor-heroes. In Alps, the central figure in oral tradition is male: Archibald Campbell (1813-1924), an emancipated slave from Alps estate. Many of the villagers claim cognatic descent from Archie Campbell, whose tomb-stone testifies that he lived to the age of one hundred and eleven (Besson 1984b:18). In Kettering, Granville, and Refuge, ancestress-heroines feature as prominently in oral history. I have already referred to the Kettering ancestress slave-child in the hog-meat gang. In Granville, 'Mother Lawrence', who was known to older contemporary villagers, is reputed to have been a slave-child at emancipation. Mother Lawrence's own mother is said to have been a slave on Merrywood estate, a participant in the emancipation celebrations, and one of Granville's ex-slave settlers who obtained half an acre of land from Knibb. This land has been transmitted through six descending generations (ibid.:12).

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[34]Accompong oral history states that the First-Time Maroons, in addition to using the cocoon-vine for camouflage, gathered the vine's giant bean-pods for food.

In Refuge, Elizabeth Bell-Merchant, nicknamed 'Queenie', her brother nicknamed 'Hard Time',[35] and their close male and female kin, all feature in the oral history of the Bell Old Family, one of the village's two central landholding family lines. Queenie's tomb can be identified in Refuge and many of the elderly villagers are her grandchildren. Oral tradition states that, at emancipation, Queenie's father cooked 'freedom dinner' on Oxford estate. His mother is said to have been one of the Oxford ex-slave settler's of Refuge, who acquired two small plots of land from Knibb, one of which remains as family land. Oral history further states that Queenie's paternal grandmother was one of three sisters brought on a slave ship from Africa to Jamaica, and separated on different plantations (Besson 1984b:14). The factual history of these reputed sisters, or shipmate fictive kin, is lost in time, but their symbolic role in the cultural history of Refuge will undoubtedly be transmitted - by women as well as men - for many years to come. Martha Brae's oral tradition also has its sacred personalities of both genders, who were ex-slave settlers of the village; and in my long-term fieldwork there, I was privileged to witness new heroes and heroines being created.

In Accompong, the central ancestral figure in oral history is Cudjoe, the First-Time Maroon who won the war and forged the peace. His reputed grave is at the sacred grove of Old Town, which is said to have been his military camp, on the outskirts of Accompong. Leeward Maroons claim, contentiously, that Nanny, the ritual Windward Maroon leader, who is generally thought to be interred in eastern Jamaica, is buried at Old Town near Cudjoe, who is said to have been Nanny's brother. This symbolic incorporation of the Windward Maroon heroine in Leeward Maroon land underlines the complementary female-male principles at the heart of Accompong society. For the reputed Cudjoe-Nanny brother-sister bond represents the sacred origin of the cognatic descent system, which perpetuates the corporate creole Maroon community. This is reinforced by the claim of common descent from Nanny by Accompong's largest cognatic family line.[36]

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[35]Wilson (1973) argued that titles and nicknames among men were a significant dimension of male-oriented reputation. However, as the example of 'Queenie' and her brother 'Hard Time' illustrates (as well as my earlier reference to Granville's 'Mother Lawrence'), titles and nicknames are used among both women and men in Jamaican villages (Besson 1993).

[36]As with burial practices, this oral history and its related ritual reflect ongoing creolisation. Kopytoff (1987) described the ascendance of the Christian God over the 'Town Master' of Accompong's traditional cosmology, from the 1930s to the 1970s. At that time, 'Town Massa' was Colonel Accompong and the weakened annual community ritual was a celebration of his birthday. By the late 1980s and 1990s, however, I found a renewed Myal ritual focusing on Cudjoe, whose

The role of Nanny as a ritual 'leadress' of the Jamaican 'runaway peasantries' (Mintz 1989:152) is one of many aspects of the hidden history of Caribbean female slave resistance, now being uncovered, that challenges the central basis of Wilson's thesis of reputation and respectability, namely, that slave women upheld the values of the master class (L. Mathurin 1975; Bush 1990; Dadzie 1990; Besson 1993). Slave women resisted slavery in many ways, some of which were common to both genders, others being peculiar to women. The former modes of slave resistance included withholding labour and malingering, plotting against the masters' property and persons, rebellion and marronage. Resistance more typical of women included controlling their own fertility, poisoning the masters' food, and the 'tongues of women'. The latter included answering back, complaining, ridicule and satire. Slave women's words not only took up their masters' time and disrupted work, but forced on them the consciousness of the humanity of the slave. These feminine modes of resistance were an outgrowth of the closer relationship of slave women to the masters as domestic slaves and concubines, a fact which Wilson (1973) himself identifies. In these contexts, rather than being willing mistresses to white men, slave women were often masters of the subtle form of slave resistance typified by the dissembling Quashee/Quasheba personality (Patterson 1967:174-81; Dadzie 1990:22, 33). Both slave women and men contributed to cultural resistance by creating creole languages, cosmologies, kinship systems, proto-peasant economies and communities; but women, as slave mothers, were the vanguard of such culture-building.

In the contemporary Caribbean, what more fitting female figure could have been found to further challenge Wilson's thesis than Mother Earth herself (Littlewood 1993). For the work of Mother Earth in Trinidad paradoxically represents both a feminist critique of the patriarchal Jamaican Rastafarian movement, and a variation on Caribbean Rastafari 'squatter peasantries' (Mintz 1989:147; Besson 1994b).[37]

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strengthened role had replaced the undermined Colonel Accompong (Besson 1994f).

[37]Littlewood states, in a footnote (1993:295 n42), that 'Jean Besson ... has pointed out that the respectability-reputation dichotomy undervalues the very real idea of resistance by Black women against slavery (e.g. Mathurin 1975); my own reading (and I think that of Peter Wilson) is that his bipolarity is to be read as polythetic: women are respectable, not as a fixed characteristic but relative to men'. However, my critique of Wilson (Besson 1993, and this article) questions Wilson's, and therefore Littlewood's, reading of respectability-reputation precisely as defined by Littlewood. Moreover, in the book in which my 1993 article appeared, four contributors of both genders criticised Wilson's thesis (Momsen 1993:6). For three further critiques of Wilson, see Bush (1990:1-3), Olwig (1990) and Trouillot (1992:26).

Conclusion

In conclusion, I briefly suggest the wider anthropological significance of the issues considered here, from the Caribbean frontier. These issues seem most relevant to the cross-cultural study of kinship, ecology and land; development, economy and dependency; the anthropology of gender; the anthropology of death and the regeneration of life; and the understanding of culture itself.

In the field of comparative kinship theory, the hidden histories of Caribbean peasant communities provide further evidence of unrestricted cognatic descent systems, which were once thought inoperable (Radcliffe-Brown 1950:43; Leach 1960:117) and are even now considered rare, examples generally being confined to Pacific and East African societies (Fox 1967; Caplan 1969; Hanson 1971). Moreover, the pioneering study of Jamaican family land by Edith Clarke (1953), a Jamaican anthropologist who had been a student of Malinowski at the L.S.E., was the first account of such an unrestricted system - predating Goodenough's (1955) rethinking of kinship systems.

Associated with the comparative study of cognatic and unilineal descent has been an unresolved controversy on kinship and ecology, which has likewise focused on Africa and the Pacific (e.g. Fox 1967:162; Allen 1971).[38] The Caribbean data, with unrestricted systems in the Antilles and matriliny in the Guianese interiors, are suggestive in relation to both the variable of land availability and the role of culture in shaping kin group structure. The Caribbean case also highlights paradoxical perceptions of land, as both a scarce economic good and a symbolic resource unlimited through its permanence and immortality (Besson 1987a, 1988). This theme finds parallels, for example, among Native Americans (Feher-Elston 1988), Australian Aborigines (Burt 1977), the Maori and Tikopia (Firth 1963:331), the Merina of Madagascar (Bloch 1971), and the Greek Mountain peasantry (du Boulay and Williams 1987), and would benefit from cross-cultural study. Caribbean peasant communities also reveal symbols of the regeneration of life in the contexts of death and mortuary ritual (cf. Bloch and Parry 1982). In Trelawny oral tradition, the immortality of the unrestricted family line and its corporate estate is contrasted with the mortality of individuals and humankind. While specific kin and trusteeships are referred to as 'expiring', 'dying', 'ending', family land is said to 'carry continuously, serving [ever-increasing] generations forever'

[38] Allen claimed to resolve the debate, but his conclusions supported the hypothesis that land scarcity generates less restricted descent systems. See Besson 1979 for a preliminary discussion of how the Caribbean data relate to the controversy.

(Besson 1988:44-45). The sacred fruit trees, which are part of the corporate estates of both family land and common land, are variations on this regeneration theme. When these corporate estates are further typified by generation or community burial grounds, as in Haiti, the Virgin Islands, Barbuda, Maroon and non-Maroon communities in Jamaica and the Guianas, and as was the custom among the proto-peasant slaves of Jamaica, St. John and Martinique, the recreation of kinship and community by chattel slaves and their descendants is most clearly symbolised.[39] The elaborate and extended mortuary ritual among peasants in Jamaica and elsewhere in the region, emphasising the placing of the dead in an active spirit world, also reinforces the regeneration theme.

In addition, the hidden histories of Caribbean peasantries, with their adaptive customary tenures in the oldest colonial sphere, further reveal the local wisdom of so-called Third World peoples that needs to be considered for sustainable development (Chambers 1983; Besson and Momsen 1987). The analysis of the symbolic aspects of family land constraining the maximisation of production from a capitalist point of view, also enhances comparative perspectives on so-called 'under-production' and on culturally 'embedded' economic systems, reinforcing an alternative non-Galbraithian view of 'affluence' (Dalton 1967; Sahlins 1972; Besson 1984a, 1987a). The existence of both kin-based and common Caribbean customary tenures, reflecting cultural resistance, likewise contributes to correcting the over-emphasis in dependency and world-systems theories on metropolitan-satellite and core-periphery relations (cf. Keesing 1981, chapter 21). For the creation of these tenures, at the Caribbean plantation-peasant interface, highlights the internal class dynamic at the very core of the 'periphery' and underlines the fact that independent thought and action by the powerless are only constrained, not destroyed, by dependency and hegemony.

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[39]On such burial practices see e.g. Larose (1975) on Haiti, Besson (1984b) for further information on Jamaica, Olwig (1985:41) on the Danish/American Virgin Island of St. John, Bilby (1989:147) on French Guiana, Tomich (1991:80) on Martinique, and Mintz and Price (1992:68-70) on Suriname. While I have also identified yard burial in the British Virgin Islands of Tortola and Virgin Gorda, I have been struck by its absence in Trinidad and Tobago, and in Barbados. Such absence of yard or community interment appears to be related to more intense land scarcity and to urbanisation. This hypothesis is supported by variations in interment patterns among Jamaican villages, described in this article and in Besson 1984b. The encroachment of tourism is likely to be a further factor affecting such practices. The significance of corporate burial grounds, linked to elaborate mortuary ritual, among Caribbean slaves and their descendants can be underlined by reference to Hertz's point (1960:76), quoted by Bloch and Parry (1982:4), that 'the death of a stranger, a slave, or a child will go almost unnoticed; it will arouse no emotion, occasion no ritual' (cf. Besson 1984b:18).

With reference to the anthropology of gender, Moore has observed that feminist anthropology needs to confront more fully 'the question of how gender is constructed and experienced through race', in addition to the structuring of gender through colonialism, neo-imperialism and capitalism (1988:10). My critique of Wilson's thesis shows that Afro-Caribbean peasant women, as well as men, have been central to resistance, culture-building and development in the colonial and neo-imperial race-class stratified Caribbean Region (cf. Besson 1993).

In conclusion, empowering and engendering the hidden histories of Caribbean peasant communities contributes to discovering 'the nature of culture, understood as a continuous process of retention and renewal' (Trouillot 1992:30). Caribbean customary tenures have both retained and transformed aspects of European and African landholding, in the context of a wider creolisation process, which has been described by Mintz as 'the most remarkable drama of culture-building in the modern world' (1980:15). For example, family land has retained the underlying grammar of West and Central African kin-based unilineal landholding, but has transformed the organisation of kin groups and land transmission to resemble more closely the cognatic systems of Pacific and East African societies; a transformation rooted in Euro-American slave plantations.[40] The unrestricted family land system maximises land rights and kinship lines in the Caribbean context, in contrast to African unilineal descent and British primogeniture, and enables gender equality in kinship and landholding.[41] With circulatory transnational migration, enabled in part by unrestricted customary tenures that permit migrants to return, this creolisation process has continued. For example, the still hidden oral history of Caribbean migrants and their descendants in London tells of handfuls of earth from eternal family land being treasured as symbols of Black British identity.[42]

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[40]This analysis draws support from Mintz and Price's 'grammatical' model of African-American creolisation (1992).

[41]Fox (1967:31, 97) has pointed out that male control characterises matrilineal systems, and Caplan (1989/90:51) has noted that gender equality typifies Maffia Island cognatic landholding. Common tenure also enables gender complementarity.

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From Slavery to Freedom: Black Women, Cultural Resistance and Identity in Caribbean Plantation Society

Barbara Bush (Stoke-on-Trent)

Until recently, black women were firmly on the 'margins of history'. My own research, complemented by studies by Beckles (1989), Morrissey (1989) and Gautier (1982) built on earlier pioneering studies by, for instance Mathurin (1974) and Alier-Martinez (1974) opening up discussion of Caribbean slave women. Yet, in contrast to studies of black American women and slavery, considerably enlarged by the development of both an academic 'black female epistemology' and a rich black women's literature, the Caribbean slave woman's identity remains under-explored. This relative invisibility is connected with three factors: the paucity of evidence from the black, as opposed to the white perspective; the fact that Caribbean and, even more so, British-born black women, are still under-represented in academic research and, closely linked, the continued dominance of white, male paradigm of slavery, including slave identity. Here I too can be criticised for no matter how much I exercise empathy, I am not a black woman and my 'social memory' embraces white, not black definitions of slavery. Hence, in this paper I attempt a critique of white constructions of black women's identity as opposed to exploring identity as it is experienced 'from the inside' by black women (a voyage of self-discovery now being charted through literature, art and oral tradition). The wider framework of this critique is the interlinked and deeply complex historical development of both black and white identities and the relationships of power and resistance centred on cultural differences that sculptured those identities.

The study of slavery is an area fraught with problems, for the 'racial terror' of enslavement still has a powerful and emotive influence on black consciousness in the Atlantic Diaspora (the black diaspora in the Americas, the Caribbean and Western Europe originating through the transatlantic slave trade). It is linked to politically loaded contemporary debates over black identity and the nature of gender, class and race oppression. Even the definition of geographical (Caribbean, West Indies), historical (Eurocentred periodisation) and socio-cultural (black diaspora, Afro Caribbean, coloured, mulatto) terms has developed out of concepts inherited from European expansion and colonisation and is thus problematic (Cole-Hamcharii, 1993). My focus within these debates is how black

women's history has been interpreted, what Catherine Hall has eloquently dubbed 'white visions' of black lives (Hall, 1993). White men (and in certain ways, white women) had the cultural and economic power to define slave identities in a way that reinforced their own superiority. But an examination of white-defined 'identities' also demands recognition of black cultural resistance produced in the mediation of those identities. The cultural struggles that developed over the negotiation of black identity are central to understanding a divided or 'double consciousness' of slaves in simultaneously accommodating to and resisting enslavement. For black women the term 'triple consciousness' may be more appropriate as they not only had to negotiate conflicts between a racist white and a formative Afrocentric creole culture, but also gender identity in relation to white men, black men and white women.

My central argument is that women redefined the 'imagined identities' created for them by whites by effecting a fusion between African-derived cultural beliefs and powerful resistance strategies which undermined the slave system. By women, I refer here primarily to the ordinary field slaves who constituted the most culturally 'independent', if the most harshly treated, slaves. Ironically, it was the powerful tensions they experienced between production in the formal economy and biological and cultural reproduction of the slave community that ensured their pivotal contribution to the general resistance against, and successful survival of slavery. I have concentrated primarily on the later and, arguably, most exploitative phase of slavery when a conjunction of disintegrative forces culminated in the overthrow of a system which had indelibly reshaped the world.

To try and elaborate on a thorny and controversial area I will, firstly, try to clarify the meanings of culture, identity, power and resistance in the context of women's location in slave society and the complex web of interactions between black and white. This addresses the crucial question of what identity is. I will then examine how black women's identities were interpreted through 'the eyes of the [white] beholder' and assess problems of critically evaluating such identities in relation to historical sources. This is followed by a closer look at the link between white oppression and resistance struggles in which women engaged to defend themselves and the slave community against psychic and cultural disintegration. Finally, I have included an analysis of the transition to freedom and the reworking of black identities that emerged with developments in colonial society in the nineteenth century. Here, I will argue that, in contrast to the post-slavery period, the slave experience, brutal and reifying as it was, forged a particularly dynamic cultural resistance that became subdued and more covert in freedom. Thus the unifying theme is the search for the 'invisible' woman and the continuities in cultural struggles in black communities in

the Caribbean. Such struggles were generated initially by the trauma of slavery, but remain vibrant in contemporary black communities.

The Cultural Interface? Identity, Power, and Resistance in Slave Society

To bring women back from the margins of history, to illuminate their struggle for an individual and collective consciousness and identity led me to focus more closely on the relationship between culture and resistance and the shaping of new identities within the complex and changing patterns of gender, race and class oppression. Slaves did not simply react to material conditions. It was important to extend definitions of resistance away from group or individual protest centred on freedom to wider forms of non-cooperation symbolic of a strong desire to retain human integrity and survive. Such resistance embraced a struggle against forces that undermined the slaves' Afrocentric culture. I do not use this term in the sense of a static, 'authentic' culture or 'mythologised Africanity', which Paul Gilroy has so eloquently criticised (Gilroy, 1993) but as a recognition of the significance of Africa as a source of origin of black diaspora culture. The deep significance of cultural resistance is now being recognised. Michel de Certeau explains it thus:

> ' ...culture articulates conflicts ...It develops in an atmosphere of tensions, and often of violence, for which it provides symbolic balances, contracts of compatibility and compromises, all more or less temporary. [The] ingenious ways of which the weak make use of the strong, thus lend a political dimension to everyday practices' [1]

This highlights action, not passivity but multiple resistance tactics and survival strategies that, for slave women, included 'compromise' in, for instance, concubinage with white men contrasted with strong resistance to pressures that threatened to undermine the Afrocentric family, marriage and childbearing customs. It embraces subversion of the system through female control of fertility that arguably included use of abortion and contraception. Women were able to turn the system to their own advantage in their participation in the informal economy centred on the provision-grounds and slave markets, allowed by the planters to boost food supply. All these tactics involved either tensions or 'contracts of compatibility' between white and slave cultures.

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[1]Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life:* London, 1988, p.xvii, cited in Gilroy, p.103.

Culture is a term frequently used loosely, without any precise, shared understanding. Here culture is broadly interpreted as a shared set of values coherently linking language, religion, kinship, work, family, leisure and the individual's conception of the world around them. It is adaptive and dynamic, not static and linked to power relations. 'Taking culture seriously' has opened up new debates in development studies whilst the greater emphasis on the relationship between ethnicity and identities in cultural studies has highlighted the centrality of culture, not only in interpreting post-modern society, but in the historical context. Cultural studies have contributed to a greater understanding of power, ideology and resistance, in that culture has been redefined as conflict and negotiation over meanings attached to class, gender, ethnic and national differences (Allen, 1990, pp. 331-347). These developments have provided important new conceptual frameworks but caution is needed in their use for there is a tendency to over centralise culture and minimise broader structural influences. Slave women's reality was that of profound economic exploitation as by 1800 they constituted 80 per cent of all economically active slaves(Higman, 1976, p.30). In establishing some autonomy of action and self-identity they had to fight against deep constraints of law, punishment and complete lack of human rights within an expanding international economy based on inequality and exploitation. Neither cultural nor structural analyses in themselves are adequate; as Peter Worsley points out in addressing the tensions between idealist and materialist conceptions, culture embraces the 'interplay between economic and political institutions and the rest of life'; it is not a 'separate sphere' or 'causally secondary' but central to the 'crucial institutions' which produce and communicate the ideas we live (Worsley, 1984, p.60). Here this conceptualisation of culture informs discussion of both white and black identity and links identity to wider political struggles against slavery.

Women are centre staged in the analysis because of their powerful imput into cultural production in the 'private' as oppose to the 'public' sphere (dominated by white culture). In any culture, women are arguably the principal transmitters of culture within the family and local community. But as Rosalda and Lamphère (1976) stress, it is women's work that ensures that the world and indeed humanity continues (a factor now at last being recognised in, for instance, development projects in Africa and elsewhere). These links between culture and material survival are clear in the vital contribution slave women made to social and biological reproduction in the slave community, in having prime responsibility for child care and domestic labour and contributing significantly to cultivation of slave plots or provision grounds. As Walter Rodney emphasised, women in the Caribbean became the primary 'cultural shield' that frustrated the efforts of whites to dehumanise Africans through servitude (Rodney, 1969, p.34.)

The cultural contribution of women, however, must be located within their relationship to white patriarchy and black sexism. This distinction is important. The definition of patriarchy as the manifestation and institutionalisation of male dominance over women and children in the family and wider society (Lerner, 1986, p.242) is arguably applicable only to white men in slave society. Sexism, as an ideology of male supremacy and of beliefs that support and sustain it, has validity for relations between black men and women. Thus sexism can still exist in societies, like black slave society, where patriarchy has been undermined. Women were more likely to be concentrated in the less skilled jobs in the formal economy, and even the skilled work of seamstressing or pottery-making was undervalued. Valued skilled male slaves often held positions of authority in the slave community and polygynous households (Higman, 1976, p.277). Overseers were predominantly black men and slave men in general benefited from women's domestic labour. A planter's wife commented on this:

> 'A wife and family ...have been the greatest possible advantage to a [male] slave ...his wife works and cooks, the children soon begin to assist the mother and they all work in their gardens and grounds' [2]

Such gender differences point to the existence of a specific 'women's culture' that develops within, and sometimes in resistance to, the primarily male-defined elements of particular cultures (in this case Euro and Afrocentric elements of slave society). Such 'women centred culture' is vital to the development of identity and encompasses friendship networks of women, their affective ties, rituals and 'folk knowledge'. As Lerner points out, women live a duality, as members of the general culture and as partakers of women's culture (Lerner, 1986, p.242). This 'women's culture' is explored in more depth below and links in with my reference in the introduction to the possible 'triple consciousness' of slave women.

The labyrinthine interpenetrations of culture, gender, class and power arguably reverberated more dramatically on the lives of slave women than those of slave men. Power relations between masters and slaves have always been ambiguous. For women slaves these ambiguities were intensified by the sexual dimension of their relationship with whites. The greatest power was vested in white men who were the major slave owners but as absenteeism increased this power was mediated through white or black male overseers. Power over black women's bodies in their productive capacity as asexual labour units thus meshed with male control

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[2]Mrs. A.C. Carmichael, *Domestic Manners and Social Conditions of the White, Coloured and Negro Populations of the West Indies* (London, 1833), 2 vols., 1, p.80.

over their sexuality, a form of oppression rarely experienced to the same degree by male slaves. Women risked cruelty if they resisted the white males' 'droit de seigneur'. Evidence suggests that white women also displaced their sexual jealousy in vicarious cruelty towards women slaves (Bush, 1990, p.114). This emphasises their equivocal position in relation to white women who were also subject to white male authority but had power over black men. After the early period of white indentureship, white women were increasingly withdrawn from physical labour and were serviced by black women. They were also slave owners in their own right (Beckles, 1993, pp.72-5).

Power in slave societies was not completely monolithic; indeed, as I have argued elsewhere, some black women may have had limited sexual power over white men securing favours, including manumission, for themselves and their children (Bush, 1990, p.111). Here Foucault's argument about sexuality as a vital transfer point for relations of power is useful. This suggests the importance of power from below in the 'manifold relationships of force' in play in the machinery of economic production, families and institutions (Foucault, 1978, pp.103-7). However, the very nature of chattel slavery, backed by force and coercion, led to a peculiarly strong concentration of power. Women as field slaves worked in the harshest conditions and had the additional burdens of child-bearing. This has led to a tendency in the historiography of slavery to see women on large scale plantations as atomised production units estranged from kin, community and culture when it was arguably those very material pressures that inspired communal solidarity and resistance and kept the goal of liberation alive. These relationships of power are also paramount in understanding how black women made sense of their world and defined their identity. Their relationship to white women is again central here.

Black women became the 'other', whose debased and sexual nature reinforced white women's identity as pure and feminine, the white patriarchal ideal of womanhood. However, as Hilary Beckles has shown, not all white women fitted the idealised white male norm that had a far more powerful influence in the later eighteenth century reflecting the increasing power, materially and culturally, of bourgeois society. Up to the end of the seventeenth century there were poor indentured white female servants in the British Caribbean whose conditions of servitude were little better than those of slaves. In Barbados, at least, there is evidence from this period of sexual relationships and marriages between black men and white women (Beckles, 1993, pp.78-9). This becomes almost unheard of by the end of the eighteenth century when the need to maintain the profitability of sugar monoculture led to tighter regulation of slave society through both formal and informal codes. Yet whites did not demonise black male sexuality in Caribbean slave society to the same degree as occurred in

the Southern USA. An anonymous poem, 'The Runaway', quoted by the Jamaican planter, 'Monk' Lewis, is perhaps revealing here:

'Peter was a black boy;
Peter, him pull foot on day;
Buckra girl, him Peter's joy;
Lilly white girl entice him away.
Fye, Miss Sally, fye on you!
Poor Blacky Peter why undo?
Oh! Peter, Peter was a bad boy;
Peter was a Runaway
Him Missy him pray: him Massa so kind
Was moved by him prayer, and to Peter him say
"Well, boy, for this once I forgive you! - but mind
With the buckra girls you no more go away!
Though fair without, they're foul within;
Their heart is black, though white their skin.
Then Peter, Peter with me stay;
Peter no more run away!'[3]

The tone is trite and moralising, but in terms of identities of black and white women and, perhaps, more centrally, the attitudes of white males, it is revealing. Whereas it is usually black women who are depicted as the temptress, here it is a white woman. However she has been depicted as 'black within'. Does this reflect a general white misogyny towards all women as 'vessels of the devil' who without male control will lead men into wickedness? Indeed, strong arguments can be made that distinctions between white and black women were not based on gender but race and socio-economic position. In child-bearing, for instance, both black and white women shared the hazards of childbirth and, by the late eighteenth century, experienced increasing manipulation of their bodies by white males as a masculine medical science undermined female-centred midwifery and wrested more control over female sexuality. Indeed, white women may have been the greater victims of the development of what Foucault has termed 'Sciencia Sexualis', as the dictums of white plantation doctors created a new area of cultural struggle for black women during the late period of slavery.

Far more research on white women, particularly poorer women and prostitutes, whose behaviour was regarded as outside respectable codes, is indicated. This relates not only to their relations with black women but black men. Interestingly, whilst it has been recognised that white women experienced sexual jealousy, we have no record of how black women felt

[3]Cited in Matthew Gregory Lewis, *Journal of A Residence Among the Negroes of The West Indies* (London, 1845), pp.120-1.

about white women. In the informal economic sector, however, there is evidence of competition between white and black female hucksters at the end of the eighteenth century but also a blurring of identities. Beckles suggests that in many ways their marketing patterns and associated customs were similar, with white women typically carrying baskets on their heads and babies strapped to their hips in an African manner (Beckles, 1993, pp.78-9). This underscores the way in which engagement in the informal economy was one area in which black women could exert a powerful influence.

But it was not only poorer white women who assimilated cultural traits of slaves. Visitors to the Indies commented adversely on the habits of white creole women. The portrayal of Antoinette Cosway as Rochester's mad first wife (starkly contrasted with the devoted and sensible Jane Eyre) in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) is a reflection of such negative attitudes. According to Edward Long, white women suffered from 'constant intercourse with negroe domestics' whose 'drawling dissonant gibberish', modes of dress and manners they 'insensibly adopted'. Women on remote plantations were particularly vulnerable. To quote Long:

> 'We may see in some of these places, a very fine young woman awkwardly dangling her arms, with the air of a negroe servant lolling almost the whole day upon beds or settees, her head muffled up with two or three handkerchiefs, her dress loose, and without stays. At noon, we find her employed in gobbling pepper pot, seated on the floor, with her sable handmaids around her.'[4]

Poorer urban female slave-owners were also spatially close to slaves and little better educated. Cultural fluidity was arguably two-way. Maria Nugent, the wife of a Jamaican governor and hence more 'anglo defined' as an expatriate, believed that white creole women were not untainted by contact with black culture. It was also noted that female slaves in habitual contact with whites, especially the 'light-skinned obedient housekeepers' and long-term mistresses of white men, emulated white women (Bush, 1981, p.255).

As Paul Gilroy argues, there is an ambiguity of culture in the Atlantic Diaspora and in the Caribbean black and white permeated cultural barriers (Gilroy, p.31). Carnival is a classic example here. Edward Kamau Brathwaite explored this dynamic cultural fusion in his seminal book, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820* (1971). The term Afrocentric is useful, however, in defining the primary cultural am-

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[4]Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica* (London,1774), 5 vols., 2, pp.412-13; P. Wright ed., *Lady Nugent's Jamaica Journal* (Kingston,1976), p.112; John Stewart, *A View of Jamaica* (London,1823), p.330.

bience of slaves (as opposed to whites whose primary cultural ambience was Eurocentered). There were common threads of Afrocentric culture throughout the English, French and Spanish Caribbean that had important implications for cultural struggles and identities. Within these common threads diversity existed. For female slaves this existed between creole and African-born women, domestic and field slaves, old and young. Women's experiences were also influenced by their location in the labour market in terms of whether they worked in rural or urban locations, in small- or large-scale enterprises. In the cultural cauldron of slave society, cultural negotiation had to take place not only between black and white, creole and African-born but also amongst slaves taken from different parts of Africa. However, a link was forged through resistance to slavery and the overarching economic and ideological power of whites.

White men essentially defined the limits and discourses of this power. However, white women were also significant as transmitters of the racist culture of slavery through their centrality to social reproduction and their unique status as upholders of male cultural honour. This involved 'behaving' as respectable, morally superior women in contrast to black women who, for whites, exhibited the worst forms of 'bad African practices'. In this respect, there are contrasts with other colonial societies such as South Africa or the Indian Raj that were also structured by an institutionalised racism (Sharp, 1991). This contrasts starkly with the cultural role of black women as transmitters of resistance to white power. Thus whilst both black and white women's identities were forged through their relationships to the slave system, black women's identities were uniquely influenced by resistance to enslavement and the identities constructed for them by contemporary racial ideologies.

At this point it is essential to explore the idea of 'identity'. There are two main ways of looking at identity. Both are intrinsically related and applicable in this analysis. The simplest concept of identity is as a tag or label, that is, how you are seen by others. This applies to some extent to white constructs of black identity, explored below. But identity is also how you see yourself, your consciousness of being and where you fit into the world. This more complex definition raises the question as to what the distinction is between identity and consciousness and how do both concepts relate to cultural struggles? Kum Kum Bhavnani defines identity as a concept that has provided motivation for many struggles that challenge social, economic, political and ideological injustices, including those against enslavement. It is, however, a 'slippery concept' as it is not fixed and is never closed. Hence identities are always being reworked and individuals can have different 'identities' in different contexts (Bhavnani, 1993). Arguably, this has relevance to black Caribbean women both in terms of historical time scales (periodisation of the changing character of

slavery and processes of personal transformation through capture, creolisation and emancipation) and the way in which women had to negotiate a multiplicity of overlapping and frequently conflicting identities, as in the tensions between the white-defined public and the more Afro-defined private spheres of their lives.

But how do these fragmented identities motivate and underpin collective as well as individual resistance? What *is* 'black identity'? For Paul Gilroy it

> '...is not simply a social or political category used or abandoned according to the extent which the rhetoric that supports and legitimises it is persuasive or institutionally powerful...it is lived as a coherent (if not always stable) experiential sense of self...[an] outcome of practical activity...language, gesture, bodily significations, desires.'[5]

There is still a problem here as to how a coherent identity can be lived when it is not always stable. Also, how does this coherent identity relate to the concept of 'double consciousness', that is a simultaneous identity within and without a dominant culture, first developed by W.E.B. Dubois writing in the early nineteenth century, which Gilroy also analyses in some depth? In *The Black Atlantic* (1993) Gilroy has developed an important and challenging analysis of black identity and consciousness, a sensitive and difficult area to problematise. However, he refers in the main to a generalised, as opposed to gender specific, identity. To progress the analysis here we need to explore the ways in which consciousness is formed and the relationship between individual identities and group consciousness. The problem of reading the present back into the past must also be considered. How applicable are concepts, including gender, identity and racism, which were developed in the context of present intellectual debates and socio-economic formations, in understanding both white and black identities, male and female, in the era of slavery? Here it may be helpful to look back, with a critical eye, to the Marxist and Hegelian origins of debates about consciousness and struggle. These were developed initially within the context of Enlightenment thought which produced a serious challenge to the philosophical and material basis of slavery.

In *The German Ideology* (1845-6) Marx distinguished between a consciousness of the immediate sensuous environment (for slaves, consciousness of physical pain), a consciousness of limited connections with other persons (awareness of being a woman, as opposed to a man may be seen here as a fundamental primary consciousness) and an empowering 'self-consciousness' engaged in a struggle for mastery over material forces (slave

[5] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London, 1993), p.102.

revolt). In his critique of the Hegelian idealist conception of consciousness and historical change, he argued against 'historical conceptualisations of an epoch' which separated consciousness from ordinary life. From here he developed the theory of ruling ideologies that perpetuated this 'illusory' separation and proposed that, for the mass of people, the removal of false conceptions of 'consciousness' of humans could only be affected by 'altered [material] circumstances', not 'theoretical deductions'. 'Liberation', he wrote, 'is a historical not a mental act and is brought about by historical conditions.'[6]

There have been many valid and important critiques of classic Marxism's over-emphasis on materialism and monolithic notions of power, but the analysis of problems of consciousness and liberation are still on the political agenda and should not be too readily dismissed. Current postmodern conceptions of the relationship between consciousness and power deriving, for example, from Gramscian analyses of ruling class ideologies and Foucaultian notions of the plurality of power relations and life worlds, or identities may also have only limited relevance to slave society: they were developed within a culturally specific framework of mature twentieth century 'Western' liberal democracies. With the exception perhaps of Foucault, none of these theoretical developments have specifically analysed relations between power, sexuality and consciousness and none have improved on the earlier theorists in tackling gender. Thus, in looking back into slave society, Marx's original conception of consciousness may still have some relevance in underscoring the links between power, material conditions, consciousness and liberation, that is in explaining where consciousness comes from.

If we accept that identity is a self-consciousness of the economic, cultural and ideological frameworks that shape the 'reality' of human beings' diverse experiences, we can see how problematic this was in slave society. Was black women's identity structured through 'white visions' of the black world, 'imagined' identities that fitted in with the interests of slave owners and their justifications of slavery; or was it shaped through pro-active responses to material conditions in the form of both resistance and compromise? How much was it influenced by where individuals located themselves in relation to the 'counter-culture' of the slaves and, for women, a 'women's culture' that threaded back to Africa? The problem which faced slaves was how to reconcile and negotiate the fragmented and conflicting identities deriving from these different influences to develop a more stable identity that could ensure survival and generate resistance. The use of the concept 'identity' will relate here to the problems of se-

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[6]Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology* (London, 1965), pp.52-3,42-3,56.

curing a coherent individual and group self-consciousness that can inform political action and /or resistance against oppression. At this point we can perhaps explore these interconnections between gender, identity, consciousness and resistance. This demands a closer examination of black women's gruelling Odyssey from Africa to the slave plantations, as interpreted by contemporary observers and modern historians and writers.

Daughters of Injur'd Afrik? White Constructs of Slave Women

Although in many ways slave men and women shared a common oppression through slavery, women's experience differed qualitatively to that of male slaves. As already stressed, important differences existed in the jobs they did, the status accorded to them, manumission, social mobility and the exercise of power. Moreover, the conflicting demands of reproduction and production placed women under 'psychic pressures' not experienced to the same degree by free women or slave men. A sexual division of labour that perpetuated gender inequalities existed in both the public and private spheres of women's lives with important implications for women's identity. Why and how did this gender inequality originate? This is partially answered in the division of labour in the African societies where women were captured, the relationship between the internal African slave trade and the transatlantic trade, the changing labour demands of Caribbean slavery and women's position in both European and African patriarchy.

Women have always been vulnerable to enslavement because of their status in patriarchal societies and women slaves predominated in the internal African slave trade. Indeed, as David Brion Davis points out, on the earliest pre-literate tablets from the Middle East, the term for 'slave girl' appeared before the more general, 'slave' (Davis, 1984, p.35). In Africa, as in the Caribbean, women were highly valued for their labour, not simply as child-bearers. Moreover it may be argued that women experienced slavery of a sort within the family through the practice of 'bride price' and were accustomed to being bartered and having little control over their own destinies (Robertson and Klein, 1983, pp.4-9). So for some women, their identity was already defined pre-capture as domestic slaves. For those who were not enslaved, identity came primarily through motherhood and in relationship to the deeper structures of family and kin that cohered African societies. It can be argued that in such societies collective as opposed to individual identity prevailed and women were supported by a 'remarkable degree of female solidarity' (Cutrufelli, 1983, p.146). Unfortunately, the lack of contemporary evidence relating to the

lives of eighteenth-century African women is even more acute than for Caribbean slave women. Rare accounts, however, provide a slim testimony to how women were taken into captivity. 'Damel [King of Cayor on the Gambia River] has pillaged the village of Yene. He has taken my woman captive . . . ' laments an anonymous eighteenth-century Wolof man (cited in Thesée, 1987, p.284). Women were taken in dawn raids as the first up and out of their houses, sometimes being surprised drawing water at wells outside the village. Deception and bribery was used, not simply violence, and women could also be sold into slavery to settle debts or as punishment for adultery or crime. Richer women could substitute slaves (Boulègue, 1987, p.243).

In *A Woman Named Solitude* (1972) the French writer, André Schwarz-Bart, imaginatively recaptures the experiences of one African woman from capture, through the profound disorientation of the passage to the Caribbean, to adjustment to slave life. Her daughter, Solitude, is based on a real woman who was embroiled in rebel activity in Guadeloupe during the French Revolution and executed in 1802. She was reputedly born to a 'salt water' African raped on ship board by white men. This sensitive fictional narrative is grounded on a solid anthropological understanding of West African societies and affords some valuable insights, illuminating key themes in slave women's lives which historical research is now beginning to confirm. It emphasises how essential it was for women to hold on to some vestiges of their own identity to prevent cultural and psychic annihilation. The sense of fear and loss must have been profound. Africans were aware of the 'hell' of the Caribbean and the long waits in the dreadful slave barracoons or 'castles' on the coast, but resistance was evident from the moment of capture. Women, separated from the men, were reputedly 'sulky' and sang 'sad laments'. They were forced by 'threats and blows' to eat and if they were still recalcitrant they were flogged (Bush, 1990, p.56).

The ultimate denial of their new 'reality' was suicide, possibly, as Sir Hans Sloane noted in the early seventeenth century, in the belief that they would return to their own countries through death. The incidence of suicide remained high in the initial 'seasoning' period in the Caribbean. Such responses were viewed by whites as evidence of mental instability. Alexander Falconbridge, for instance, observed that on being purchased by Europeans many Africans became 'raving mad' and many died so, 'particularly the women'. Failed suicide was also punished by floggings. There is evidence, however, that, for some, survival was secured through collective solidarity and dignity. Reverend John Riland, a planter turned abolitionist, who sailed in 1801 from Liverpool to Jamaica in a slaveship, recorded that when women were forced to dance on the deck they always maintained their dignity and 'kept themselves aloof', manifesting

'an indignation that long continued habit could not suppress when forced to behave childishly' (Bush, 1982, p.18).

Once on the plantation women and men had to begin to negotiate new identities as chattel slaves. For women this meant confronting white constructs of their identity that made them particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation, and adjusting to a labour regime that undermined existing gender relations, including the constraints imposed on them by arranged marriages and domestic enslavement that existed in Africa. These transformations had profound implications for women's identity. As women were 'freed' from former constraints they experienced a new and possibly worse form of subjection, but this may paradoxically have led them to a greater consciousness of the need to resist and question their oppression. How did chattel slavery produce this changed consciousness? Firstly, it did not operate according to the cultural contexts of African societies; indeed it actively disrupted and negated those contexts. Secondly, it defined slaves as generalised commodities denying their human reality and bonds. Whites sought to create identities for slaves that would effectively deculturalise them and render them an atomised, effective and controllable work force as manageable as the other (animal) 'stock' on their plantations. Disempowerment through cultural 'stripping' is stressed in Orlando Patterson's definition of slavery as 'social death' where slaves became 'dishonoured persons', outside the society in which they lived. This was achieved through 'natal alienation', the denial of the slave's history and right to a past or future. It was reinforced through renaming (often with ridiculous, inappropriate names such as Phibba, Clarissa, Lavinia) and non-acknowledgement of kinship bonds (Patterson, 1986, pp.56-58).

Names are the very essence of an individual's identity. Naming ceremonies are particularly important in many pre-modern cultures and are associated with ritual and symbolism. In rural African societies names had deep social significance and were endowed with magical significance. 'Secret' names are common in many societies and frequently received on initiation into adulthood and cults. Such names can be used harmfully in sorcery (Patterson, 1986, p.55). It is possible that slaves concealed their own names to deflect the wickedness of whites and protect themselves against strange fellow slaves. We can never know if African-born slave mothers, for instance, gave their children 'secret' African names, although there is evidence that African-derived rites associated with new born infants persisted into late slavery and even into the twentieth century in rural areas in the Caribbean (Smith, 1956, pp.133-4). The existence of these 'secret identities' is an exciting speculation but impossible to verify. However, concrete evidence does confirm how names, like branding, were central to white constructs of black identity.

As anonymous 'goods' women initially had no names or were given generic 'African' names. In Jamaica these were frequently based on Asante (Akan) day names and used by whites to confirm the 'otherness' of women. The most common were Quasheba, Cuba and Yabba, from the Asante, Akosuwa, Akuwa and Yaa or Yawa (Sunday, Wednesday, Thursday). Such names were still given to new-borns by 'an old woman' in August Town in British Guiana in the 1950s, a testimony to the enduring social significance of naming in African-Caribbean communities and of women to cultural continuity (Smith, p.131). Sale advertisements, however, simply described both male and female as 'young, healthy negroes of the Ibo country' (or Popo, Ashanti etc.) whilst advertisements for slave runaways often identified African slaves by owners' brands or markings associated with their ethnic origins such as tattoos, ritual scars and filed teeth. The complexity of this naming and identification is clearly shown in one such advertisement for a Kingston-born woman named Flora who had run away with her daughter, Phiba (sic) 'who calls herself often Cuba and Abba'. Here we have evidence of names in existence other than those given by masters. Cuba was also 'marked on both shoulders A.W.' but the brand was 'raised in lumps from endeavouring to take them out' a testimony to how one woman rejected her slave identity.[7] On the plantation some 'generic' names persisted, but with creolisation English names, such as Mary or Lucy, became more common with surnames appearing towards emancipation identifying women with their owners. It was mainly these names that carried through into freedom and which inspired, for instance, Malcolm X's own renaming, the X symbolising the lost identity of blacks in the diaspora.

Such a change of name represents the most fundamental change of identity in any cultural context. But the ways in which slave identity was defined also stimulated a consciousness of oppression and the need to engage in struggle against the fragmentation of identity represented by naming and definitions of slave status. New forms of resistance associated with migration and dislocation emerged. 'Modern life begins with slavery' writes Toni Morrison, 'black women [under slavery] had to deal with postmodern problems ... certain kinds of dissolution, the loss of and the need to reconstruct certain kinds of stability' (Morrison, 1988, p.221). As C. L. R. James argued in his vanguard study of black resistance, *The Black Jacobins* (1938), the large-scale sugar plantation was not a semi-feudal relic but a 'modern system' producing new and dynamic social relations and developments in collective consciousness. Of course, the debate over the nature of slavery as feudal, transitional or proto-capitalist is still very

[7]Slave advertisement placed by Alexander Walker, Luana, St. Elizabeth, Aug.30th, 1779, *The Jamaica Mercury,* June 26, 1779.

much alive, but the concept of the slave as a 'migrant' is very useful in explaining changing identities.

David Brion Davis also sees slaves as the first truly 'modern people', arguing that they have been defined as outside the familial and social structures of the slave-owning society from ancient times. He defines a slave as:

> ' ...a replaceable and interchangeable outsider faced with the unpredictable need of adjusting to a wholly alien culture ...the prototype for the migratory labour and confused identity which accompanied every phase of human progress.'[8]

This definition of outsider status was confirmed by white affirmation of the ingrained inferiority of the slave through racist stereotyping. The psychoanalytical concept of the 'other' that has informed recent critiques of post-colonial literature exploring 'transformations' through migration is helpful here (Gurnah, 1994). By creating 'imagined identities' for slave women, whites defined their 'otherness', that is the possession of qualities that were simultaneously denigrated and desired. Identity of both white and black was arguably derived from the displacement of negative or desired but socially outlawed traits (such as sexuality) on to the 'other'. I am wary of using this concept too loosely here as psychoanalysis is rooted in twentieth century consciousness that centralises the individual. It is thus limited in exploring a 'collective consciousness' within wider structures which arguably determined much (though not all) slave resistance. However, 'othering' in the context of slavery is related to the Hegelian observation that a master was defined only through the slave and without the slave the master had no identity and hence no power to exert. It may thus have some validity in understanding cultural struggles and the need for whites to deny and actively repress slave culture, demonising slave women as 'she-devils' and 'harlots' whilst being seduced by their exoticism. Equally, the concept of 'the other' has relevance to black women's transformations through migration. Unlike other migrations (such as Indian indentured labour in the Nineteenth-century Caribbean and post-war North African migration to France) women constituted a significant proportion of the active labour force. Whereas women in other migrant societies have, if possible, retreated into their own families and communities as a means of defence against a hostile society, this was not possible for female slaves and they were brutally forced to confront their 'otherness'.

Women's lives, writes Maya Angelou, were dissolved through slavery into a 'fabulous fiction of multiple personalities' (Angelou, 1989, p.209). Women were 'concrete in their labour and surreal in their humanness'.

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[8]David Brion Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress* (New York, 1984) p.46.

How far does this 'long memory' of an African-American woman, attempting to disentangle present day identities, match up to the historical evidence on images of black women? Images are metaphors created by the observer and as mental conceptions can be 'imagined' and used symbolically. Mainly negative images merged into dominant stereotypes, or composite pictures of individuals, which, whilst reflecting an element of reality, also distorted it. Stereotypes exhibit a notable durability even in the face of historical change. Thus, although images of black women did change (in visual representation, for instance), a core of negative stereotyping has remained around black female sexuality with important consequences for women's identity. Such images predated women's capture in Africa and have helped obscure the concrete exploitation of black women, sexual and economic, and precluded a more valid appraisal of their changing identities. How, then, did myths and misconceptions of black women arise?

When the Moroccan traveller, Ibn Battatu, visited Mali in 1352, he was shocked by the sexual freedom and nakedness of women but did not express any objection to the sight of both males and females working in copper mines (Davis, 1984, p.46). Travellers' tales from Africa embellished upon this dual persona, commenting on women's strength and muscularity and the way they competed with men in 'enduring toil, hardship and privations'. Women's drudge status was confirmed by 'polygamy' which whites believed simultaneously promoted promiscuity and reduced women to 'the domestic slaves of men' (Bush, 1990, pp.25-6). Women were depicted as either submissive workhorses, emasculating matriarchs or 'hot consitution'd' scarlet women, lewd and promiscuous in their relations with black and white men. Black women's physical appearance was adversely contrasted with the bourgeois ideal of female beauty, emphasising their animality and inferiority. Interestingly, there is no 'good' versus 'bad' Caribbean stereotype equivalent to the 'scheming Jezebel'/ 'loyal Mammy' comparison of the American South where an idealised seignorial paternalism was the basis of slave society. Contrasting images of women are depicted in this anonymous poem from Jamaica, 'The Sable Venus: An Ode' (1765):

'O Sable Queen! Thy mild Domain
I seek and court thy gentle reign
So soothing, soft and sweet.
Where meeting love, sincere delight
Fond pleasures, ready joys invite,
And unbrought raptures meet.

Do thou in gentle Phibia smile,
In artful Benneba beguile,
In wanton Mimba pout

In sprightly Cuba's eyes look gay
Or grave in sober Quasheba
I still shall find thee out.'[9]

Tempting, scheming, wanton; all is here except the concrete reality of labour. Interestingly, the writer uses several 'African' names, but whether they were used to reinforce the exoticism and otherness of black women or were in common usage is debatable.

In late slavery, British abolitionists created other 'personas', from 'sable beauties' and 'dusky Venus's' to the innocents betrayed in need of pity and protection. At least the exploitation of slave women was now acknowledged. Abolitionist poetry created biographies of women's lives graphically charting the horrors they suffered from capture to sale in Jamaica. Again there seems to be some licence with names in two very similar abolitionist poems published in the 1790s, 'Cruelty Extraordinary Committed On a Female Slave of the Name of Yamba in the Island of Jamaica' (c.1790) and 'The Sorrows of Yamba; or, a Negro Woman's Lament'. Christian abolitionists advocated redemption through Christian conversion and 'moralisation'. The Ladies Society For the Relief of Negro Slaves was particularly concerned that slave women lacked male protection and were prevented from leading the lives of 'normal good wives'. In female abolitionist propaganda, they were identified as the 'weakest ... of the human race' and worthy of white women's special 'maternalistic' attention (Midgely, 1992, p.28). Slave women were now expected to assume the 'respectability' of the bourgeois ideal of womanhood and deny their 'bad' African side.

Unusually, there does exist from this period the only substantial autobiography of a Caribbean slave woman. *The History of Mary Prince* (1831) reveals Mary's complex and ambiguous relationship with her master and mistress and gives some useful insights into slave conditions and treatment of slave women. But the author is in many ways atypical. For much of her life she had been attached to households, close to her white owners. She was one of the rare black women to make it to the relative freedom of England and had saved enough money to buy her freedom. In the Caribbean she had developed strong survival strategies that embraced both compromise and resistance. However, her sense of identity must have been affected by her relative isolation from her family and the cultural nourishment of the slave village on a large plantation as well as her marriage to a free, Christian skilled artisan. Already a convert to 're-

[9]Cited in Bryan Edwards, *The History, Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies in the West Indies* (London, 1801) 5 vols., 2, p.33. For American female stereotypes, see Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I A Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York, 1985), ch.4.

spectability', she had repudiated her former 'bad ways' including 'loose' sexual relationships before leaving the Caribbean. On moving to London with her owners she left them to work for a prominent abolitionist family as a domestic servant. Her memoirs were dictated to the women of the family and were subsequently circulated in abolitionist circles to show how slave women needed help to achieve the respectability of 'normal' women. In narrating her life to white abolitionist women on whom she was dependent for her survival in an alien society her memoirs arguably became framed by white perceptions of black women and, as Moira Ferguson points out, it is only by reading between the lines that some sense of the real Mary Prince emerges (Ferguson, 1987).

At the same time cruder stereotypes of slave women were in more widespread circulation in England as the debate over slavery intensified. These were evident in the caricatures of the cartoonist, James Gillray, and the popularity of the 'Hottentot Venus' which, like many written accounts, stressed the physical unattractiveness and animality of black women. Plantocratic accounts berated the licentiousness of slave women, their insubordination, sharp tongues and unruliness that justified the use of the whip. They were neglectful mothers, careless midwives, idle and malingering domestics and scheming Jezebel's out to get what they could from white men (Bush, 1990). More generous descriptions still tended to project white concepts of beauty and female behaviour onto black identity as in John Stedman's account of his beloved mulatto mistress, Joanna, whose face was 'full of native modesty' with 'a perfectly formed, rather small nose' and only slightly prominent lips. A beautiful mulatto slave on Matthew Lewis' Jamaican estate, described by her paternalistic owner as having an 'air and countenance' comparable to the Virgin Mary as depicted in Renaissance art, was the 'most picturesque object' he had seen for twenty years.[10] Mulatto women were thus generally viewed in a more favourable light than African women although in many ways it can be argued that their identities were more problematic.

Until recently, little or no attention was given in mainstream histories to these thorny questions relating to images and identities of slave women. Yet it may be argued that images of women signify the extent of respect accorded to them in any society. There were glaring 'silences' in black women's history up to the late 1970's that were only addressed in rare, pioneering works by black women themselves. However, the sources to fill these silences remain fragmented and problematic, biased towards a Eurocentric perspective. Source material from the early period of slavery

[10]John Stedman, *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition Against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam,* 1772-1777 (London, 1798), 2 vols., 1, pp.52-3; Lewis, pp.69-7.

is more scarce, but the abundant pro-planter and abolitionist accounts from the later period are flawed by bias and observations based on hearsay as well as direct experience. Testimonies are frequently contradictory, rendering evaluations of the more intimate areas of slave women's lives particularly difficult to piece together.

The lack of sources from the ordinary field slave's perspective makes it difficult to avoid accusations of Eurocentricity in attempts to look at the slave woman from the 'inside looking out' while impersonal accounts simply enhance women's anonymity. What African-American historians term an 'Afrocentric feminist epistemology' cannot be developed without recourse to oral history. This includes the 'imaginative appropriation of history' by black women (Gilroy, 1993, p.222). All are problematic for historians. Oral history has been worked into fine fiction and poetry; for instance the Guyanese writer Grace Nicholas has vividly evoked the experience of slave women as part of the heritage of modern Caribbean women in her poem *I is a Long Memoried Woman* (1983). But, conventionally, fiction cannot be cited as 'historical evidence' although arguments can be made that all history is 'imagined' and that which comes through the 'long memory' created by a particularly traumatic event such as slavery is of equal if greater validity for people of African descent than the arbitrary and selective use of the 'historical fact' by white historians. As French historians of the Annaliste school have postulated, traumatic events such as slavery have a powerful influence on the 'longue durée' of 'mentalités' (Dolan, 1991). This is a valuable concept in exploring the relationship between 'long memory' and a black identity which was profoundly influenced by the emotional shock of slavery as an individual, group and cultural trauma (Muccelli, 1986, p.73). As white historians, slavery has contributed significantly to our 'historical consciousness' but from a profoundly different perspective, and thus we can only glean a limited insight into how women's identities developed through slavery and after. Here historical research can arguably be enriched by anthropological perspectives, given the centrality of culture to identity.

Recent anthropological research into Caribbean societies has provided some fresh insight into the validity of oral history and 'first-time' histories of Caribbean societies in understanding their past. Also of value are the challenging new developments in feminist anthropology which, through innovative research into 'women's culture', since the 1970s has overturned the assumption of male anthropologists that 'man equals culture'. Anthropological sources from West African societies and the contemporary Caribbean, particularly where they relate to cultural forms such as religion which manifest elements of clear cultural continuity, are also helpful but can lead to ahistoricity in analysis. Is it valid to read from the present into the past, given the dynamic nature of culture and cultural influences?

From a white perspective, a deeper understanding of the cultural struggles of black women may only be possible through a judicious exercise of empathy. It is important to work on any evidence which does exist, but also to try to understand the 'underlying consciousness' of oppressed groups. This is where understanding culture struggles and negotiations becomes relevant.

Searching for the Invisible Woman: Cultural Struggles in Late Slavery

Cultural struggles involved powerful resistance to white-constructed identities of slave women. They facilitated the negotiation of new identities rooted in women's 'African' memory which enabled them to reclaim their own destinies. During the initial 'seasoning' period women slaves would have begun to develop a fuller consciousness of their slave status as they were integrated into plantation work regimes. Problems of adjustment to both physical environment and strangers were arguably paramount in terms of individual identity. As Edward Long noted:

> '...[Slaves] were soon dispersed among a variety of different estates many miles asunder ...often [finding] themselves mixed with many strangers, differing from them in language and against others they hold a rooted antipathy. But they are chiefly awed into subjection, by the superior multitude of creole blacks ...'[11]

There may have been an initial hostility to strangers as vulnerability and powerlessness produced a defensiveness and sense of group solidarity amongst those who had already developed a 'creole' identity. However, the passivity suggested by Long (in a sense a wish-fulfilment as the new African slaves were generally feared as rebel-rousers) is not borne out in other contemporary accounts. 'The unhappy Africans' wrote Snelgrave 'are not bereft of the finer feelings, but have a strong attachment to their native country together with a just sense of their liberty'. Newly imported Africans were blamed by whites as primarily responsible for 'seditions and mutinies' which accounts for the serious African-led rebellions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the formation of Maroon communities in which women took active roles, including leadership roles (Bush, 1990, pp.55-56).

Both men and women found 'fictive kin' among established slaves to replace their lost families. In West African societies, the extended kinship group was the kernel of social organisation, interaction and cultural

[11]Long, 3, p.131.

expression. The planter, Bryan Edwards, observed that Jamaican slaves of both sexes 'adopted' young Africans, perhaps to replace children lost by death. He maintained that the newly arrived slaves considered themselves adopted children also and called the slaves who cared for them parents and 'venerated them as such'. In conversation with newcomers 'seasoned' slaves could 'revive and retrace the remembrance of ideas and past pleasures and scenes of their youth', reinforcing bonds with Africa and assuring cultural continuity (Bush, 1990, p.105). The building of slave villages 'beyond the ken' of masters, the 'yard', deriving from the communal African compound, and the family provision-grounds were also vital to the rebuilding of a viable cultural matrix of which whites had little understanding. The yard was particularly important in that it served as a common meeting ground as well as developing a cohesive identity.

In white imagery new African slaves, male and female, were depicted as naked with only scant coverage. Sometimes idealised images of the nuclear (and patriarchal) slave family were presented as in the illustration of 'A Family of Negroes Slaves from Loanga' in Stedman's account of eighteenth-century Surinam (Stedman, 1798 , vol.1, p.89). There may be a grain of truth in this representation as white allegations of the pathological and disorganised matriarchal slave family have been strongly disputed (Bush, 1990). However, the exigencies of slavery must have put an exceptional strain on women and would have necessitated renegotiation of their relations with slave men, particularly as creolisation occurred and exploitation intensified with the development of large-scale plantation production. Arguably this involved a weakening of African patriarchy which, as aforementioned, became overshadowed in an institutional context by white patriarchy.

Throughout slavery, women's participation in the labour force and the greater need to develop individual survival strategies (resistant in running away and 'accommodating' in entering into concubinage with white men) would have changed perceptions of their own gender identities. This may explain the contrasts between descriptions of creolised female slaves and Maroon women whose identity may have remained more akin to that of women in African societies. From white descriptions, slave women come over as strong, defiant individuals who are neither dependent nor repressed by slave men whereas Maroon women tend to be portrayed as 'drudges', the passive victims of polygyny, sustaining a more conventional role within the sexual division of labour (Bush, 1990, p.21).

After abolition of the slave trade pictorial depiction of slave women began to change. In addition to the profoundly African images associated with abolitionist propaganda, in contemporary art women are now shown working in the field and mill wearing European dress. But often they are also wearing the head-tie, perhaps more typically African than

the nakedness focused on by whites. The head-tie can be interpreted as one of the clearest assertions of an 'African' identity. As the pioneering anthropologists of 'Black Atlantic' culture, Melville and Francis Herskovits concluded:

> 'The custom of wearing ... headkerchiefs originated in Africa and appeared most strongly in those areas of the New World in which African values retained their greatest strength, in some areas, in some cases, in which revolutionary resistance to slavery had been most pronounced and successful.'[12]

Cultural struggles intensified with economic development and white identities of slave women became more racist and derogatory (but also more fragmented and conflictual). It was arguably in the 'high' and most oppressive period of slavery (c.1780-1838) that the most significant and sophisticated cultural negotiations occurred linked to important changes in individual and group consciousness. These coincided with more intense exploitation of female labour combined with fuller creolisation. Concepts of freedom stimulated by abolitionism, the French Revolution, the Haitian liberation struggle and a more literal reading of the essence of Christianity were also influential. Slaves seemed even more ungovernable and women, as the 'backbone' of the labour force and internal marketing system through their informal economic activity, became the epitome of this 'ungovernability', as contemporary records show (Bush, 1982). Hegel is again relevant in understanding this development of slave consciousness. The 'moment of revolution', he wrote, comes when the slave recognises that her or his primary identity belongs with other slaves and is not necessarily mediated through the master. The slave thus no longer depends on the master for 'recognition' or identity (Hegel, 1977, pp.111-19). Domination, cultural and psychological, depended on a degree of acquiescence from the slave. This had never been fully given but became even more difficult to retain as slavery came to an end.

An area which engendered the most fierce cultural struggles between master and slave was religion and associated 'bad African practices' such as medicine and witchcraft. In animist sub-Saharan African societies religion coheres an individual's understanding of her or his world determining both individual identity and sense of place and collective consciousness. Religion, mysticism, magic, political and family organisation were unified into a powerful cultural framework inseparable from everyday material existence. Music, dance, art and oral tradition gave tangible expression to this culture. Even though slaves came from different areas, and some may even have been converted to Islam, these central elements would have provided the core framework of their lives. The power of this cultural base

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[12]M.J. and F. Herskovits, *Surinam Folk Lore* (New York, 1936), pp.4-5.

is evident in the importance of religion, music and oral expression, from calypso to rap, in the modern black diaspora. During slavery women creatively built on this base and made an important contribution to establishing an 'oppositional' Afro-slave culture.

White fear of slave culture is evident in the laws that were passed to suppress and/or control drumming, dancing, obeah and 'noisy' slave funerals. A clear link was made between Afrocentric culture and resistance to the system. The laws passed by the Jamaican House of Assembly, in 1826 stipulated that no owners or overseers should permit an assembly of 'strange slaves', 'nightly meetings' or allow 'any beating of drums, blowing of horns or shells' or other music on property under his charge. Any slaves practising obeah 'with intent to excite rebellion or endanger the life or health of any other slave' were to be severely punished.[13] Slave funerals and obeah were particularly feared. Funerals were riotous, life affirming affairs but dangerous because so many slaves attended. There is evidence that women, who often played a prominent part in slave funerals, may have rejected Christian baptism in order to secure for themselves a traditional African funeral reputedly not allowed in Jamaica for those who were christened (Bush, 1990, p.157).

Obeah was linked to poisoning which was seen as a particular forte of black women. 'An Obeah man or woman (for it is practised by both sexes) is a very wicked and dangerous person on the plantation', observed John Stewart.[14] Obeah, was a term used by whites to describe the 'pagan' religious ceremonies and spiritual beliefs of slaves. (In the French and Spanish colonies, the term *vodún* or 'voodoo' was commonly used.) It was directly African in origin and involved priests who dealt in magic, poisons, herbs and folk medicine, a highly secretive activity. Whites frequently lumped it together with myalism which was more concerned with group worship. During the eighteenth century, these religious practices were frequently implicated in fomenting rebellions. In an 'aura of spirit possession' slaves could be ordered to rebel, as often by a woman as a man. In Surinam, for instance, slaves had amongst them:

> '...a kind of Sybils who deal in oracles, these sage matrons [are found] dancing and whirling round in the middle of an assembly with amazing rapidity until they ...drop down convulsed. Whatever the prophetess orders to be done ...is most sacredly performed ...which renders these meetings ex-

[13]'Abstract of the Slave Laws' cited in [Bernard Martin Senior], *Jamaica as it was, as it is, and as it may be. By a Retired Military Officer* (London, 1835), pp.149-52.

[14]John Stewart, *A View of Jamaica* (London, 1823), p.278.

> tremely dangerous, as she frequently enjoins them to murder their masters or retreat to the woods.'[15]

There are similar reports from the French Caribbean, where grand voodoo priestesses reputedly had an important ritual role and gave 'superhuman courage' to insurgents (Gautier, 1983, p.429). This arguably reflects the practice in contemporary West African societies, such as Dahomey, of women holding positions of authority which were endowed with high priestly office (Adams, 1822, p.12). Even on the eve of emancipation (by which time many slaves were nominally converted to Christianity and creolisation was well-established) slaves were still allegedly 'addicted to witchcraft' and obeah men and women 'had a great ascendancy over other negroes' (Atwood, 1971, p.269). Such white perceptions of African religious practices may have been influenced by the experience of European witchcraft explaining the fear of poisoning which sometimes bordered on the paranoid. It was generally believed that certain slaves, particularly old women, had an exclusive knowledge of herbs and plants which could be used for healing but also for more sinister purposes. Such older women were frequently blamed for inexplicable deaths, black or white (Bush, 1990, pp.74-7).

Maria Cutrufelli has argued that in Africa during the disruption of colonial rule, witchcraft was women's primary response to the cultural dislocations which affected their position in the family and wider society (Cutrufelli, 1983, pp.162-3). This has relevance to slavery in that the cultural dislocations were even more severe. Invasive and disorientating cultural change can also stimulate religious cults as individuals seek solidity and meaning to their lives. Women have frequently been leaders of, and active participants in such cults, which are characteristically outside, if not directly in opposition to, the accepted forms of religion. England during early industrialisation and colonised African societies provide examples here (ibid., p.165). Participation in 'subversive' religions thus has direct bearing on the redefinition of women's identities, the development of a group consciousness which challenged slavery and the transmission of a specific 'women's culture'.

Where ritual and religion was involved, evidence from the slave period suggests a clear continuity with Africa. Important distinctions, common to many West African societies, were made between young (and fecund) women and older (post-menopausal) women. It was primarily the older women who participated in communal decision-making and acted as 'cultural guardians' of specifically female rites of passage, traditions and folk-wisdom. Older men and women alike were looked up to for their wisdom and knowledge of folklore and medicine, and the 'care and management' of

[15]Stedman, 2, p.304.

'afflicted' negroes was often entrusted to 'an elderly negroe woman who professes a knowledge of this branch of physic' (Stewart, 1832, p.312). Transmission of female 'folk' knowledge was through the 'women's culture' which cemented links between the different generations.

It was in the area of childbirth and child-rearing that the transmission of this 'women's culture' may have been particularly important, affording women both psychic and practical support. Older women were the slave midwives and were able to pass on to younger women their skills and knowledge. This arguably included abortifacients and contraception, an area always confined to the 'shadow' world of women because of male hostility or strong social taboos on such practices. A crucial struggle around this 'women's culture' emerged in late slavery when slave owners became more preoccupied with pro-natalist policies. In trying to impose white childbirth and rearing practices which suited the economics and smooth management of plantations, they encountered fierce resistance from women and a puzzling failure of slave populations to show a natural increase (Bush, 1993, pp.83-100).

This resistance was generated by the more widespread use of European medical practices. Cultural struggles intensified with the pressures of abolitionists to improve the treatment of slaves that led to the establishment of plantation hospitals or 'hot-houses' and the employment of white doctors. However, slave medicine, in which female 'doctoresses' were expert, may arguably have been more successful than 'scientific' white medicine, if only on the psychic level. As Richard Sheridan has pointed out, slaves were alienated from white culture, mistrusted white doctors and feared dying alone. Black healers could communicate in mother tongues or creole dialect and, if their herbal remedies did not cure, they were still preferable to the purgings and bleedings, opium and mercury of the whites (Sheridan, 1985, pp.151-5). As anthropological studies have shown, the ways in which sickness and death are conceptualised is integral to the cultural framework which shapes individual consciousness. Similar conflicts to those which emerged in slave societies still exist in parts of Africa where western medicine has a problematic relationship to traditional healers and magic with important social consequences (Allen, 1992).

Folk medicine developed in the Caribbean with essentially the same features as in Africa. Women in pre-colonial African society had a vital role in healing, particularly in the practical application of herbal remedies (as opposed to the magical or hypnotic medicines with which men were more familiar) and they also became prominent in healing in the slave community. In Sheridan's estimation, women's contribution as healers and nurses outside the plantation hot-house may have exceeded all the health services provided by the white establishment (Sheridan, 1985, p.137). This importance of women is underscored by the persistence of women's heal-

ing culture into the post-slavery period. Mary Seacole, for instance, who gained a reputation as a nurse during the Crimean War which arguably outshone that of Florence Nightingale, reputedly learnt her skills from her mother, 'a competent practitioner of Jamaican [African] traditional medicine' who kept a boarding-house in Kingston in early nineteenth century to care for invalid officers and their wives (Fryer, 1985, p.246). Women in the Caribbean today retain special skills as healers as well as knowledge of abortifacients (Bush, 1993, p.93).

During the late period of slavery medical and other general 'improvements' in slave conditions were accompanied by attempts to moralise slaves, particularly the women, which led to a direct confrontation with the Afrocentred religious beliefs which cohered slave culture and resistance. Slave religion, even after the introduction of Christianity, retained a high African content and there is evidence of a notable aversion to Christian marriage and baptism among female slaves. Women were 'well acquainted with all the customs and mythology of their native country' (Riland, 1837, p.104) and may have rejected Christianity to a greater extent than men. They had little to gain from Christianity with its deep-seated misogynism and patriarchal doctrine emphasising female subordination. This contrasted starkly with the relative egalitarianism of West African religions and Cutrufelli has noted a similar rejection of Christianity by women under colonial rule (Cutrufelli, 1983, p.52). Women wanted to retain, for instance, the relative independence and equality in divorce that slave marriage customs allowed. As one prospective Jamaican bride who failed to turn up at her wedding noted, she had lived with her husband for many years in 'peace and comfort' and feared that Christian marriage would give her husband licence to 'beat and ill-treat her' (Senior, 1835, pp.42-3).

Christian baptism was also viewed by women with strong suspicion. One Jamaican woman on Matthew Lewis' estate, despite her father and husband both going through the baptism ceremony, refused as she was pregnant and did not know 'what change it might produce upon herself and the infant'. Creole women slaves were not necessarily more receptive of Christianity. A neighbour of Lewis' allegedly used all his influence to persuade his 'foster sister' to be christened, but in vain, 'for she had imbibed strong African prejudices from her mother'. In Lewis' opinion this was a common attitude amongst female slaves (Lewis, 1845, pp.53,121). Generally speaking planter efforts to moralise slaves and render them docile through religion proved ineffective. Christianity stressed submissiveness on earth in return for reward in the hereafter in contrast to the life-affirming African beliefs. As emancipation approached, slaves may have outwardly given more acceptance to Christianity, but the content of their religion and beliefs remained African, shaping an important counter-

identity which gave meaning and validity to their lives. Whilst a minority of slaves may have genuinely embraced conversion, the majority clung to their own beliefs which still underpinned a fierce resistance to the system necessitating the retention of strong repressive laws. On the eve of emancipation Jamaican law still stipulated:

> 'Penalty of fifty pounds for not endeavouring to suppress unlawful assemblies of slaves ... Civil and military officers to suppress such assemblies ... Slaves may have diversions on the properties they belong to, if no drums &c. are used; but they must be over by ten at night. Negro burials to be over at sunset ... Free people suffering assemblies in their houses to be imprisoned; if complained of ... Slaves pretending to supernatural power may be sentenced to death ... Slaves having any poisonous drugs ... in their possession, to be transported, or punished at the discretion of the [all white] court.'[16]

Such laws reflect the relative lack of success of the 'moralising' campaigns of the later period of slavery and the sheer fear of Afrocentric culture. But they also focalise the power of whites and the assumptions they made that slaves would only live lives which fitted their interests. What, one may ask, were slaves supposed to do after the early tropical sunsets when they finished work? This is useful point to expand on the more generalised developments in slave culture and their contribution to the 'moment of liberation'. The language and music of slaves which nourished and supported the collective morale demands particular consideration, and here women also feature prominently.

Cultural defiance on the part of women was often expressed through language and song. Language was a vital area of slave identity; as Franz Fanon stressed, 'to speak is to assume a culture' (Fanon, 1986, pp.13-14). Language was a first defence against loss of meaningful identity. Creole, the language of Caribbean blacks, with its rich nuances, double entendres and cutting satire was central in daily resistance to oppression. Verbal abuse was frequently used by female field hands and it was alleged that female slaves talked 'worse' than males and their language was described in derogatory terms (Bush, 1990, p.158). The slaves' everyday language preserved and dynamically adapted the rich linguistic structures of Africa, and the power of language in cultural definition and as a defence against a dominant white culture remains central to black identity in the Atlantic Diaspora.

This rich creole found expression through song and associated oral cultural forms. On slave plantations, women were often the leading singers.

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[16]Richard Madden, *A Twelve Month's Residence in the West Indies* (London, 1835), 2 vols, 1, pp.160-1.

William Beckford noted that in Jamaica, singing was 'confined' to the women, the men 'but seldomly ...excepting on extraordinary occasions' joining in the chorus. Thomas Atwood remarked that in the field women sang songs 'of their own composing' which were answered in the same manner by men. They sang 'wild choruses of joy' at crop-over, but song also expressed the sorrow of enslavement. 'There is something affecting in the songs of the women who feed [the mill]' wrote Beckford '[in] that all their songs are of a plaintive cast'. Through such singing, which was typically African in structure, based on a pattern of statement and response, work could be rendered less burdensome, slave morale could be raised and white masters mimicked, satirised or even subtly threatened.[17]

Song, music and dance accompanied all the important events in a slave's life. Entertainment in the slave village was also provided by the voices of female slaves, sometimes accompanying themselves with 'home-made' instruments. 'Plays' were highly popular, combining verbal dexterity, music and dance. Both sexes participated, forming a ring around a male and female dancer who performed to the music of the drum. Saturday night dances were also held which slaves from neighbouring plantations attended. Emma Carmichael noted that in Trinidad women often provided the 'supper, liquor and music' sometimes charging a small entrance fee, evidence of their entrepreneurial flair in the 'informal' economy. The music on these occasions consisted generally of 'the goombay, or drum, several rattles and the voices of female slaves'. John Stewart, writing in the 1820s about Jamaica, noted that on more serious occasions, 'a melancholy dirge' was sung by a woman accompanied by an all female chorus. For him women's voices were the best part of slave music.[18]

In sum, women were arguably more deeply resistant to white cultural influences than men for the reasons outlined in the discussion of the relationship between gender and culture in the earlier part of this paper. Proportionately more women than men were field hands at emancipation and, as Elsa Goveia noted in her pioneering study of slave laws, the African element in field slave culture was strong (Goveia, 1965, pp.244-5). In women's contribution to new cultural developments we have an important example of the reworking of identities through struggle and negotiation which presented a positive counterbalance to the predominantly negative 'white visions' of slave lives. Where song is concerned, women may even have transcended the prescribed limits of female par-

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[17]William Beckford, *A Descriptive Account of The Island of Jamaica* (London, 1790), 2 vols., 2, pp.120,211; Atwood, p.258. For a general discussion of slave music, see Edward Kamau Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica* (Oxford, 1971), p.225.

[18]Carmichael, 2, p.289; Stewart, pp.271-273. See also Long, 2, p.428; Atwood, p.267.

ticipation in West African societies. The prominence of women's voices in the musical traditions of the slaves may have been a unique response to slavery and the negotiation of new gender roles. Many folk choirs in the modern Caribbean are still comprised largely of women who often take the leading vocals, men giving mainly choral support (in contrast to commercialised music where men have predominated until very recently).

Similarly, women have kept a powerful profile in Afro-based religious and magical practices. In the 1920s, Martha Beckwith observed that Obeah women and men still had power ('French women' were the most feared, apparently, perhaps alluding to Haitian vodun). In revivalist cults 'mammies' claimed the gift of prophesy and healing and attained a prominent reputation. These practices were now viewed by whites as evidence of the 'emotional instability' of negroes or 'religious mania' leading to the insane asylum, an indication of the persistence of white racism and cultural oppression (Beckwith, 1969, pp.137-8,161-4). Women still outnumber men as religious devotees of syncretic religions throughout the Caribbean. To gain insight into this ongoing process of cultural identification and conflict it is useful to briefly explore the mechanisms of change during the transition to freedom and the post-slave colonial society.

Out of Bondage? Women, Culture and Colonialism

Afrocentred creole culture arguably developed through an interchange of cultural traits between black and white in an atmosphere of creativity but also tension (Brathwaite, 1973, p.41). During late slavery this generated powerful cultural struggles. Did this dynamism ironically become subdued in freedom when the absolute power of planters was replaced by a more diffuse but no less significant colonial power? The power whites in slave society could wield was enormous but it was arguably not as destructive of Afrocentric culture as the more subtle forms of cultural imperialism which emerged in the nineteenth century. Slaves, simply by virtue of the fact that they were not recognised as having a viable society and culture, were able to retain a degree of cultural autonomy where no direct conflict with planters' economic interests emerged. Pro-slavery whites were not interested in 'culturally civilising' Africans. This was not the case after abolition where there was a strong movement, promoted initially by abolitionists, to create a vigorous and free but also a 'respectable' (Europeanised) peasantry. Whereas the slave system was characterised for the most part by coercion, punishment and, in the formal economy, cultural annihilation through 'social death', whites now had to increasingly resort to more subtle mechanisms in their suppression of what they perceived as inferior cultural forms.

communities continued to develop during the nineteenth century, and in the 1865 Morant Bay Rebellion stimulated by the ongoing poverty of black Jamaicans, Daddy Sharp had his counterpart in Paul Bogle, a black Baptist Deacon (Turner, 1982, pp.11-17,57-61).

During the Apprenticeship period, however, women continued to be troublesome to whites. A 'turbulent and rebellious' protest against work conditions in St. Kitts in 1834, for instance, mainly involved women and children (Frucht, 1975, p.208). Overall, however, black women seem to become less 'visible' after this period. What happened in freedom to all those defiant, insubordinate and actively resistant women? More pertinently, how were identities of women changed and renegotiated? My argument is that the more subtle mechanisms of colonial legitimization, particularly missionary activity and the 'education' of blacks in 'Victorian values' subdued (but did not destroy) the cultural dynamism of the slave period. As standards of 'civilisation' and 'progress' were frequently assessed in terms of the 'behaviour' of women and the nature of gender relations, in freedom women were once more central to cultural struggles but this time as the key to the moralising projects of whites. As Catherine Hall in a recent seminal article has shown, the 'free villages' in Jamaica were set up to realise these projects, and the withdrawal of women from labour outside the home was seen vital to their success. 'Threaded through missionary discourse on the free village', she writes, 'was the vision of a new gender order' centred on a good family life where men were urged to become 'men of property'. Under missionary influence, Christian marriage was increasingly celebrated and the urgent need was stressed for the training of 'pious and intelligent' female teachers to instruct the 'rising female race' and counteract the 'degrading influence of slavery'. When the abolitionist Joseph Sturge urged that the 'negro' should be taught the value of independence, concludes Hall, he meant the negro man, on whom the negro woman was to learn a new form of dependence (Hall, 1993, p.110).

In her study of missionary attempts to convert black women in nineteenth-century Nevis to a 'respectable' life-style, Karen Fog Olwig argues that, for some women, adoption of white norms led to a complete break with Afro-Caribbean culture. This resulted in greater social acceptance but also to 'self-hatred', intensifying role conflicts. It undermined women's autonomous economic activities, holding dances in their houses, Sunday marketing and lucrative pottery-making, which missionaries viewed with contempt. 'Respectable women' were thus forced to retreat into 'domestic invisibility' to ensure recognition (Olwig, 1993). But the economic reality of women's lives was such that it was impossible for most to live up to white bourgeois standards of femininity. Where women did adopt the outward trappings of 'respectability' they did not necessarily deny

This 'cultural imperialism' which may be defined as a 'dominant power imposing aspects of its culture on a 'weaker' society in economic, military and political terms' (Walker, 1991, p.80) had important consequences for how women mediated European, African and related 'gender cultures'. Under colonial rule 'respectability' was imposed through education, religion and, in the later nineteenth century, through the 'traditions of Empire'. For the missionaries, reformers and administrators who permeated colonial society, argues Catherine Hall, there was 'no black culture only white' and the attitudes and practical actions of whites were important in reworking both black and white identities with important consequences for contemporary British and Caribbean societies (Hall, 1993, p.127). West Indian free blacks were increasingly defined as 'superior English Negroes', the men of whom were needed to service the Empire as soldiers and missionaries. This white construct of the 'civilised' Caribbean black thus became central to the vindication of the anti-slavery movement but also acted as a model for what could be achieved in the more 'barbaric' Africa through a civilising white influence. How did these developments affect black women's identity after emancipation?

There has to date been little research into the specific responses of women to nineteenth-century colonialism in the Caribbean. Historians of this period tend to emphasise the improvements in the living conditions and situation of black women which, by the mid 1840s, had turned around the negative population increase that existed throughout slavery to normal levels. With abolition, it is argued, women abandoned field labour on the estates, 'devoting their time to housekeeping and raising their families' (Sheridan, 1993, pp.36-7). This cosy scene of Victorian domesticity provides sharply contrasting images to those evoked for the times of slavery, more aptly fitting the white abolitionist and missionary ideal of free black peasant society. Missionary activity intensified in the Caribbean during the transition from slavery and in the 'reconstruction' period when it was vital for abolitionists to justify their arguments for 'free' labour. This did not always have the desired effect as is evident in the impact of the Baptists in late Jamaican resistance to slavery. Preachers known as 'Black Baptists' had arrived in Jamaica in 1783 with American loyalists from Charleston, South Carolina and later became active in movements to overthrow slavery together with 'native preachers' converted by white missionaries like William Knibb. Religious meetings became a new form of political organisation as they were essentially the only organised activity allowed slaves. But male preachers now dominated, in contrast to the earlier rebellions where female 'obeah women' had considerable influence. The serious 1831 'Baptist War' on the eve of emancipation, was led by Sam Sharp – 'Daddy Sharp' – the symbolic father leading a 'Black Family War'. This pattern of leadership of black

their African cultural roots. Recognition also came from their 'reputation' within the Afro-oriented black community (Bush, 1990, p.3). Moreover, Olwig's work does not deal in sufficient depth with the mechanisms through which respectability was imposed. Karen Anderson's study of the Jesuits' project to subdue Huron women in seventeenth century New France may provide some leads here. Her research suggests that the Jesuits also saw women as the key to moralisation of a 'barbaric' society, but the reputed 'unruliness' and sexual promiscuity of Huron women posed serious barriers and they were obliged to work through male converts who would then 'police' their own women. The Jesuits thus skilfully tapped a patriarchal misogyny deep-rooted in the creation myths of many cultures and in so doing curbed female power and undermined the more egalitarian relationships which had existed between men and women before colonial intervention (Anderson, 1992, p.179).

Similar processes of change can be charted in other societies oppressed by European colonisation and cultural and racial arrogance. Writing of colonial Africa, Megan Vaughn shows how women were seen by colonial officials as the 'repository of all that was dark and evil in African culture', the central figures in fertility cults and 'traditional' religions. As late as 1931, whites wrote of the 'heathen grandmothers who held mothers and daughters in their power', leaving Christian husbands to stand by 'helpless and hopeless'. Conflict also resulted over the introduction of Western reproductive medicine and women showed 'stubborn resistance' to attempts to change childbirth. The solution was the 'control' of women through Christianised men exerting their authority at home to curb their heathen practices. Missionaries and administrators wanted women to represent order and when they stepped out of their 'traditional roles', for instance as migrant workers, they induced 'heightened concern' over social disintegration. (Parallels with slave women are clear here). As in most colonial societies, whites ignored women's organisations and active contribution to their communities dealing only with the men (Vaughn, 1991, pp.22-3,69,70).

For aboriginal women the process was arguably more oppressive given the brutal nature of 'pacification' and land alienation. There are many important similarities between aboriginal and slave women, in terms of sexual exploitation by whites, labour in work not deemed suitable for white women and negative stereotyping as sex objects and domestic drudges. Women held considerable power in aboriginal society, but the dislocation through displacement and relocation that brought them into closer contact with whites undermined their relations with Aboriginal men. Missionaries wanted them to become 'God-fearing women who knew no shame' and classified men as 'heads' of household. As in the Caribbean and colonial Africa, it was the men who found a 'more accommodat-

ing' niche in the emerging male-dominated colonial society; it was their power base that became the 'negotiating forum' with whites, not women's. Thus, gender relations changed dramatically, particularly on mission stations and women who had previously not feared men now experienced jealousy and violence in marriage, suggesting a deepening misogyny. But it was arguably also the women who, in maintaining their rituals and religion and remaining 'prolific dreamers', defended their communities against cultural annihilation and held on to the historical memories of the community (Bell, 1983, pp.96-8).

Although insufficient evidence currently exists, it may be argued that similar processes undermining 'women's culture' were at work in the Caribbean with analogous implications for identity, gender relations and ongoing cultural resistance. An evaluation of the outcome of moralisation projects may offer some insight into these processes. As idealistic whites became disillusioned by the failure of their utopian projects to establish a free, self-reliant and enterprising black peasantry, racist attitudes began to harden and black men and women came under even greater pressure to conform to white norms to gain 'recognition' from whites. This led, arguably, to a more sharply defined 'double consciousness' with all its implications for black identity. Nevertheless, by the 1860s it was reported that myalism and obeah and other 'barbarous' practices carried through from slavery had not been eradicated and fear was expressed that without further 'moralisation' through white influence Jamaican blacks would 'fall into as low a position as some of the worst tribes in Africa' (Hall, 1993, pp.126-7). This can also be interpreted as evidence of ongoing cultural resistance which was centred particularly around religion and attachment to 'family land', both which were fundamental to the development of a viable Afrocentric community during slavery. However, research relating to the part women played in this resistance and the ways in which gender and black identity was reworked in a specifically female context is as yet in early stages and here Besson's recent research on power and gender in Caribbean peasant communities as seen through oral traditions, for instance, may be revealing (Besson, 1993).

Can we, therefore, suggest ways in which women's identities may have changed in freedom? Certainly 'identities' constructed by whites shifted with the moralisation project and the increasing need to contrast the 'civilised', respectable Caribbean woman with the 'primitive', naked, and sexual African woman as imperialist energies were targeted on Africa, nourished by a new and virulent scientific racism. Moreover, women lost their source of cultural renewal from Africa as creolisation was completed. There was some 'free' immigration from Africa particularly to larger islands like Jamaica and Trinidad, but numbers were small and predominantly male (Clarence Smith, 1992, p.209). New identity con-

flicts emerged in the renegotiation of gender relationships. As a patriarchal colonialism emphasised male 'progress' and engagement in the public sphere, women became further marginalised from history. Colonial structures assumed gender-power relationships along the public/private divide similar to that which existed in Europe and it was men, therefore, who predominantly had dealings with whites not women.

Paradoxically, these developments ensured, however, that it was primarily women who kept alive a vernacular Afrocentric culture which had survived through slavery into freedom (Bush, 1996). This was confirmed by pioneering studies of the African diaspora made by the anthropologists Frances and Melville Herskovits in the 1930s and 1940s at a time when colonialism and colonial attitudes remained powerful. Such attitudes are evident in, for instance, Martha Beckwith's patronising study of Jamaican folk culture in the 1920s which ironically also provides insight into the degree to which an Afrocentric culture was retained as a foundation of black identity and defence against the psychic oppression and inferiorisation of white racism. Beckwith applauded the fact that 'much had been done' through the 'imposition' of British law and social and religious patterns to produce a 'sense of order'. In Jamaican households the father was 'emphatically the head authority'. Yet she also noted that women 'perhaps more than men' hesitated to be 'bound irrevocably' by legal marriage and were prominent in the 'heathen practices' which could only be eradicated if folk culture could be tamed into a 'more robust and healthy way of thinking and living' (Beckwith, 1969, p.102).

Cultural imperialism was perhaps most 'successful' in the way that upwardly mobile black men absorbed western values of female 'respectability' and the importance of the patriarchal, nuclear family to social order and black progress. As Gilroy has noted, even important nineteenth-century black intellectual leaders who stressed pride in black culture and history, such as Edward Blyden, held conventional 'Victorian values' of 'a women's place'. The honour of the race was increasingly invested in the 'good behaviour' of women and securing their centrality to the black family offered the main hope for black renewal. The black search for a new post-slavery identity was intimately linked to redefinitions of gender and sexuality characterised by the emergence of an idealised black patriarchy (Gilroy, pp.85-6). This involved retreat from the public sphere reducing women's potential for autonomous action. The reassertion of 'traditional' gender relations in black consciousness movements has persisted in, for instance, the influential writings of Malcolm X and Rastafarian beliefs, creating enduring problems for contemporary black feminists in their relations with black men. Hence, as new black political movements emerged, women once again became central to cultural struggles, this time not to reinforce white power and superiority but to assert black pride and auton-

omy and to reconstruct a black masculinity which had been distorted and undermined by slavery. In the extreme, these developments have led to evidence of a powerful black misogyny reflected in, for instance, calypso, reggae and rap which, combined with persistent negative white images of black womanhood, has created particular problems for contemporary black women's identity (Senior, 1992).

Summary

An old Ibo legend tells of how God decided not to allow women to fight wars since they were so fierce they might have wiped out the world. Perhaps there is a grain of truth in this legend in the defiant and resistant actions of slave women. Both academic research and the 'imaginative recovery' of black history in the writings of women like Toni Morrison increasingly centralise the contribution women made to the survival of slavery and Afrocentric culture. Women, in combating the demeaning and confusing identities created for them by whites during slavery, made a seminal contribution to the development of a vibrant and challenging 'counterculture' reinforced by powerful elements of 'women's culture' relating to childbirth, family, religion and medicine. However, emancipation opened up a new period of cultural imperialism with the pressure for 'respectability'. New tensions developed between the dominant white culture, imposed from above through increasingly sophisticated mediums, and the vernacular black culture with clear implications for contemporary cultural struggles and black identity.

Although the dynamic and unique cultural struggles forged through the horrors of slavery were tempered and transformed by the cultural imperialism of the colonial period, women continued to be the 'principle exponents' and bearers of Afrocentric culture and the anchors of Afrocentric family and local networks. This was crucial to black survival when poverty and migratory patterns of employment ensured that the 'respectable' stable family promoted by concerned whites became an impossible ideal to live up to except for a better off minority. Indeed, women's marginality to the white society of the formal economy and political system may have had positive outcomes in shielding them from the stresses of constantly interconnecting with two cultures and enabling them to more positively and wholeheartedly embrace an Afrocentred perspective on their world. As Cornelia Fichtl found in her work with the Jamaican theatre collective, Sistren, rituals preserved and played out by women were and are a 'metaphor' of togetherness in an Afrocentred culture (Fichtl, 1993). They have helped to solidify black women's reality in

a world where the negative white images of black womanhood stretching back to slavery and before still persist.

The origins of those images and the cultural struggles which challenged them has been the focus of this paper. I have tried to chart the fluidity and dynamism of black cultural resistance and its relevance to interpreting women's experiences in slavery through to freedom. I have argued that both material conditions and white constructs of black women's identity intermeshed with elements of African culture to reshape black women's cultural landscape and gender identity. A complex and unique cultural context developed under slavery where the forces of cultural annihilation and atomisation into alienated individuals ironically produced a powerful resistance which forged a new community and creole culture. Centre staging culture has thrown into relief subtle gender differences and a diversity of individual experiences absent from more orthodox economic and demographic studies of slavery.

Culture and identity have been shown as significant in two main ways; firstly, in interpreting the resistance which intersected the formal and informal spheres of women's lives and, secondly, in understanding the ways in which women survived slavery. What has emerged here is the degree to which women were pivotal in both the psychic and material survival of the slave community in their active contribution to the strongest areas of African-derived culture that have carried through to the present, religion, music and language. Despite severe constraints women continuously engaged in cultural struggles which challenged both the practice and ideology of slavery. But in freedom, women's identity was reinterpreted by both white and black men. With the development of black political struggles for civil rights and autonomy within a white-defined world, women gained a new significance as symbols of black identity and producers of universal values through the family. For the educated activists they became icons of 'cultural purity' while black men in general sought to reassert a male power suppressed by white men under slavery. Cultural struggles intertwined with gender conflicts thus continued to be significant to the development of post-slave societies (Macaulay, ed. 1996).

Throughout this paper, continuities in black women's experiences linking past and present have been stressed. However, my discussion of historiographical and theoretical problems relating to those experiences and to the nature of identity, consciousness and cultural power relations points to areas which merit further research. Until recently, for instance, the concept of 'double-consciousness' or indeed 'race-consciousness' in general has been articulated almost exclusively from a male perspective. There is also considerable scope for comparative studies on slave women in the non-Anglophone Caribbean. Another area warranting deeper investigation is the 'free' colonial period (Shepherd et. al., 1995). This includes

comparative studies of other groups of women oppressed by white culture and colonialism. Such women share much in common with black diaspora women and are now also reasserting their identity, drawing on their 'long memories' and cultural inheritance in ongoing struggles against white oppression. Historical insight into identity spotlights the need to combine 'conventional' historical research with the unique insights which black women's 'dreamings' of their own histories can give us. Moreover, identity and the development of self-consciousness must be viewed from the inside as well as 'objectively' in relation to ideological and material developments. This cannot be done by white historians. History itself is inseparable from culture and identity, a point that black women themselves are now forcibly making. Julie Dash's film, *Daughters of the Dust* (USA, 1991), which weaves together history and memory, collective and individual, into a compelling narrative of the lives of women in a sea island Gullah community of the coast of Georgia at the turn of the century, epitomises this new trend. Through imaginative mediums such as film, literature, poetry and oral history black women are now articulating their own histories as part of a concrete struggle to refind the 'princess in darkness' and a more equal place in contemporary diaspora societies.

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Ejemplos de la tradición narrativa - transmitida en forma oral - de los afroamericanos en el norte de Colombia

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En 1986/87 recopilé narraciones de afroamericanos en la región de Cartagena. A continuación quisiera presentar algunas de éstas, teniendo como fin originar una discusión acerca de su contenido y establecer una relación entre contenido y realidad social de sectores de la población afroamericana en el norte del departamento Bolívar.

La tradición oral de los afroamericanos se muestra en Colombia generalmente de dos maneras:

a) Los así llamados "romances" que encajan en la categoría épico-lírica. Estos tienen contenidos religiosos y profanos que están ligados a un ritmo y a una rima.[1]

b) Historias que carecen de la forma de canción o de balada, es decir prosas, que se transmiten oralmente de generación a generación. Estas narraciones se pueden modificar más fácilmente que los romances, ya que no están ligadas ni a un ritmo ni a una rima. Están más bien sujetas a la fuerza imaginativa, a la alegría fabulera y al intelecto, o a la intención del narrador.

Las historias me comentaron hombres y mujeres afroamericanos en las cercanías de Cartagena, cuyas edades oscilaban entre los 45 y 86 años. Con excepción de una persona que por criterios económicos más bien pertenecía a la clase media, todas las demás formaban parte de la clase baja. Las historias que me contaron tratan sobre todo los siguientes aspectos:

1. Relaciones de pareja entre hombre y mujer,
2. el poder de las almas de los muertos,
3. historias que transmiten en forma educativa un concepto moral,
4. historias que principalmente sirven de entretenimiento.[2]

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[1] Ver a Beutler, Gisela: *Studien zum spanischen Romancero in Kolumbien in seiner schriftlichen und mündlichen Überlieferung von der Zeit der Eroberung bis zur Gegenwart,* Heidelberg, 1969, p. 181, y, Granda, Germán de: 'Romances de tradición oral conservados entre los negros del occidente de Colombia', en: *Thesaurus,* 31, 2, Bogotá.

[2] Aquí pertenecen al lado de las así llamadas historias graciosas también algunas historias de rasgos maravillosos.

Por razones de tiempo puedo dar solamente un ejemplo para cada aspecto temático.

ad 1: El ejemplo que sigue, trata sobre la relación entre hombre y mujer y fue contado por Lina Avila, de 45 años de edad, de María La Baja.

> *Cuando el Conejo estaba casado con la Tía Zorra*
> *Como a la tía zorra siempre le gustaba robar artículos ajenos y se perdía, el conejo le pedía que se dejara de esas malas costumbres. El conejo era vanidoso, pero no era amigo de lo ajeno. En cambio la zorra por donde quisiera que pasara quería robarlo todo. Ese era el problema principal que existía entre los dos. Un día él la invitó a acompañarle a una siembra que dizque era de él, pero en realidad era de un vecino. Ella no fue sola, sino que invitó a sus amigas. Y, como era de esperar, ella empezó a tomar todo lo que veía. El conejo le dijo que lo que ella hacía no era correcto. Ella le respondió: "Claro que puedo tomar todo lo que es de mi marido." El conejo estaba nervioso, ya que la siembra no era suya, y trató de contradecir: "Tu con esos escándalos, así no vamos bien." La zorra le respondió: "Cuando uno llega a la roza de su marido es normal que uno tiene que comer e invitar a las amigas a todo lo que a ellas les provoque." Y entonces continuó cosechando el maíz y la patilla, cuando de repente llegó el verdadero dueño de la roza con unos perros. Al darse cuenta éste de que le estaban destrozando la cosecha, se paró y dijo: "¡Esa es la zorra!" Como él estaba preparado le azuzó sus perros a la zorra, los cuales le mordieron las paticas y el rabito mientras la zorra gritaba: "¡Ay, Cone, Cone, que me dejan sin nada, Cone!" Y el conejo respondió: "Zorra, yo te lo decía que sin nada de escándalos a las partes donde yo te llevara." Y la zorra: "¿Tú, por qué no me dijistes que esta roza no era tuya, sabiendo que no era tuya?"*

El hombre tiene que defenderse de su mujer destructora a través de la astucia. La siembra ajena sirve como cebo y la venganza del propietario alcanza a la mujer con toda la fuerza sin que el astuto marido tenga que hacer algo él mismo. La historia muestra un comportamiento entre los sexos que refleja un espíritu de solidaridad muy bajo. También pone de manifiesto el miedo del hombre de ser engañado por una mujer enérgica. Este miedo le hace pensar que tiene derecho a defenderse con métodos ruines. Ya la designación

de la mujer como zorra señala la peligrosa superioridad de la mujer en un sentido negativo.

Otra interpretación de la historia se daría si uno tratara de relacionar esta narración con las travesuras de bribones que fueron recopiladas en diferentes lugares del nuevo mundo bajo la rúbrica de historias populares afroamericanas.[3] En este contexto pienso en las llamadas historias de "Trickster", en las cuales el Trickster, Anansi,[4] Brer Rabbit[5] o como fuese llamado muestra su superioridad a través de la astucia. Se trata siempre de una criatura débil y a menudo despreciada, que cosecha sus éxitos por medio de una astucia sin escrúpulos y que inclusive se vuelve poderosa. Aquí se da la impresión de que al Trickster le es más importante probar sus inagotables trucos, que el éxito de la empresa, que en la mayoría de los casos no fue planificado. El Tío Conejo de mi ejemplo puede ser interpretado también como Trickster. Ya desde muy temprano fue establecida en la literatura especializada la conexión entre la situación económica y social de la población afroamericana y la figura ficticia del Trickster: "(...) 'the Rabbit represents the colored man' inasmuch as 'the negro, without education or wealth, could only hope to succeed by stratagem'."[6] En palenquero fueron registradas una historia del Tío Tigre y del Tío Conejo por Aquiles Escalante,[7] y una historia: "El Conejo, el Tigre y el Sapo" por Carlos Patiño Rosselli.[8] También en Venezuela se registraron diferentes historias del Tío Conejo.[9]

ad 2: La creencia en la aparición de las almas de muertos está bastante arraigada en la población afroamericana del norte de Colombia.[10]

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[3]A continuación me referiré especialmente a: Abrahams, Roger D. (ed.): *Afro-American Folktales. Stories from Black Tradition in the New World,* New York 1985. Las historias reunidas por Abrahams procedían sobre todo de la zona caribeña y de los Estados Unidos de América, en especial de sus estados sureños.

[4]En especial Islas Caribeñas y Guayanas.

[5]En especial estados sureños de los EE.UU.

[6]Esto lo comprueba Mrs. Christensen en la introducción de sus historias de Sea Island en 1892. Citado según: Roger D. Abrahams: op. cit., p. 20.

[7]Aquiles Escalante: *El Palenque de San Basilio. Una Comunidad de Descendientes de Negros Cimarrones,* Barranquilla 1979², entre p. 120 y 121.

[8]Nina S. de Friedemann/Carlos Patiño Rosselli: *Lengua y sociedad en el Palenque de San Basilio,* Bogotá 1983, p. 224-229.

[9]Por ejemplo: B. Antonio Arraiz: *Tío Tigre y Tío Conejo,* Caracas 1975, o, Pilar Almonia de Carrera: *Este era una vez* [lugar y año de publicación desconocidos, aproximadamente 1968].

[10]Thomas Price se ocupó intensivamente durante sus estudios empíricos, entre los años 1952 y 1954, con los ritos mortuorios y sus correspondientes creencias y

Las causas de la aparición de estas almas ante seres vivos pueden ser diferentes: Al muerto no le fue posible arreglar en vida sus cosas terrenales, él aparece por capricho o porque parientes aún vivos le piden ayuda. Al mismo tiempo parece que las almas de los difuntos vigilan el cumplimiento de los valores sociales o sea que velan por los valores tradicionales. El velorio de nueve días tiene una importancia especial para las actividades futuras de las ánimas. Así que es entonces muy importante que los parientes y amigos, pero también personas que vivieron en conflicto con el difunto, se esfuercen en dar mucho respeto al muerto – entre otras cosas – con su presencia en el velorio. Con este gesto se tranquilizará al ánima del difunto, y se evitará que ésta influya en el futuro negativamente la vida de los vivos. Las almas de los difuntos pueden buscar contacto sobre todo con familiares, pero también con amigos o con aquellos con los cuales tuvieron en vida problemas sin solucionar. La influencia de las ánimas puede ser tanto negativa como positiva. Según declaraciones de hombres y de mujeres afroamericanos pueden mostrarse las ánimas de diferentes formas, por ejemplo: como sombra, como formas sobrenaturales, como aparición invisible que se puede percibir o escuchar. Las historias muestran la fuerza de las ánimas que se mezclan en los intereses de los seres vivos como elemento regulador y que llaman a éstos al orden. Si no se cree en la fuerza de las ánimas se recibe castigo, pero también si se violan las normas de la sociedad y si no se le da el debido respeto a los moribundos. Las narraciones muestran a veces un claro sincretismo entre catolicismo y culto ancestral.

La siguiente narración me fue contada por Ignacio Guzmán, de 77 años de edad, de La Boquilla.

> *Había una vez un señor al cual le gustaban mucho los velorios. Estando él en un caserío, el cual se fundó gracias a los residuos del progreso industrial traído por los turcos, que permitió el relleno de algunas reas de una zona pantanosa, se murió una criatura. Este señor se decidió ir al velorio, y partió hacia él en la oscuridad. Por el camino sintió la necesidad de defecar, y para esto salió del camino. Mientras hacía su necesidad se le apareció un aparato*[11]*. Este aparato hacía movimientos extraños, pri-*

prácticas en relación con las ánimas en Manzanillo, pueblo de pescadores en las cercanías de Cartagena. Ver Thomas James Price: *Saints and Spirits: A Study of Differential Acculturation in Colombian Negro Communities* (tesis doctoral), Evanston 1955.

[11]Otra palabra para designar al alma de un muerto.

mero caía contra el suelo, luego se iba levantando y engordando hasta llegar a una altura de tres metros y medio. A continuación se deshinchaba y caía nuevamente al suelo en medio de la oscuridad de la noche. El señor se desconcertó ante tal aparición y se dijo: "¿Carajo, qué hago? Si no voy al velorio van a pensar que tengo miedo, y si salgo a correr, de pronto es alguien que se está burlando de mí, y me hago ridículo." En su indecisión tomó el señor un arma compuesta de un cuero de manatí que traía consigo. Con ésta pegó al aparato, cortándole. Entonces el aparato exclamó: "Oye, soy tu amigo Catio!" Y el señor dijo: "Ay, porqué me hiciste eso?" Y el aparato dijo: "Porqué pensé que tenías miedo e ibas a correr. Pásame la mano aquí por la herida!" El señor pasó la mano por la herida del aparato, lo llevó a su casa y lo curó.

Pero cuando el señor volvió a su tierra empezó a recibir una enfermedad en la pierna, la cual no pudieron curar ni los mejores médicos con los avances de la medicina. Hasta que por fin hubo que amputarle la pierna.

El narrador cuenta las vivencias de un hombre que no cree en las posibles apariciones de las ánimas y por lo tanto actúa de una forma falsa y cae en peligro. Finalmente paga su falta de fe con la pérdida de una pierna. Se pone de manifiesto que en el trato con las almas de los muertos no se pueden romper reglas preestablecidas. A éstas no se puede agredir, hay que respetarlas. También se ponen de manifiesto los peligros que acechan en la oscuridad.

ad 3: Un concepto moral transmite la siguiente historia que me contó el señor Juan Gutiérrez, ciudadano de Cartagena de 70 años de edad. Parece que esta historia está bastante expandida en muchos lugares de la costa del norte de Colombia.

El Pescadito

Había una vez un niñito que tenía un pececito en una latita. Su familia era muy, muy pobre. Un día se fue al colegio, y ese día el papá no había ganado nada para el alimento. Entonces tuvieron que matar al pececito y se lo comieron. Cuando el niñito regresó del colegio fue a ver a su pececito y no lo encontró. Entonces le comentaron lo que había sucedido. El niñito empezó a llorar y se fue a la playa. Allí se fue metiendo en el mar, llorando y diciendo: "¡Adiós papá, adiós mamá, adiós mis hermanitos, que me han matado mi pececito!" Esto lo iba repitiendo mientras se metía más profundo en el mar, hasta que el

agua le daba ya hasta la nariz. Mientras tanto los familiares en la casa, atormentados por lo que habían hecho y preocupados por la suerte del niño, decidieron salir corriendo hacia la playa, llegando en el momento en el cual el niño ya tenía el agua casi hasta la nariz. Viendo a su hijo en peligro de muerte, el papá se metió inmediatamente en el agua y logró salvarle en el último momento.

Esta historia se podría interpretar de dos maneras: Primero, el niño en su desesperación debería entender que las necesidades económicas de los padres los obligaron a sacrificar al pececito, pero, que a pesar de ello, seguían amándolo. Es decir: el aspecto económico debe ser superpuesto al emocional. La segunda posibilidad es que el débil puede ser traicionado sin que pueda defenderse, así que, como única salida, le queda la autodestrucción. Este último aspecto es tratado en una narración muy parecida que fue registrada por Pilar Almonia de Carrera en Venezuela[12] de una forma más clara, ya que en esta historia el niño castiga a la familia desapareciendo. Esta historia muestra también una paralela con una recopilada por Aquiles Escalante con el título: "La hija desobediente".[13] Aquí, en contra de la voluntad del papá, la hija hace amistad con una serpiente, que crece hasta un tamaño inmenso. Finalmente la niña se mete al mar siguiendo a la querida serpiente.

ad 4: Finalmente, como ejemplo para el último complejo temático, quisiera presentar un cuento que me comentó Basilio Pérez de Palenque:

Había una muchacha que tenía tres hermanos. Ella enamoró a un joven que tenía los dientes de oro y se casó con él. Y resultó que éste era el diablo. Una vez un hermano fue a visitarla y ella le dijo: "Vete porque dentro de poco viene fulano y te puede matar." El hermano respondió: "Yo no creo que mi cuñado me vaya a matar." A pesar de todo se metió debajo de una batea y al poco tiempo llegó el marido. La hermana preguntó a su marido: "¿En caso de que venga aquí un hermano mío, que le haría Ud.?" Él respondió: "Yo comería con él y no le haría nada." Al rato ella fue con disimulo y trajo al hermano. Cuando el diablo vio a su cuñado, la mandó a la cocina, llevó a éste a un cuarto, lo despedazó y se lo comió. Cuando

[12] 'La muchacha y el pez', en: Pilar Almonia de Carrera: *Éste era una vez* [lugar y año de publicación desconocidos, aproximadamente 1968], p. 37-42.

[13] Cf. Aquiles Escalante, op. cit., p. 95/96.

ella regresó preguntando por su hermano, el marido respondió que él se había ido. Meses después vino el segundo hermano a visitarla y a preguntar por el primero, extrañado de que éste no había vuelto a casa. Ella le respondió: "Ay, cállate, yo no sé dónde está él, pero tengo miedo de que mi marido te encuentre aquí. Mejor te esconderé." Cuando el esposo llegó a la casa exclamó: "Ah, me huele a carne humana." Su mujer le respondió que él estaba equivocado y volvió a preguntarle: "¿En caso de que venga aquí un hermano mío, que le haría Ud.?" El diablo respondió: "Yo comería con él y no le haría nada." Entonces se repitió la misma historia. A los seis meses vino el tercer y último hermano a visitarla y a averiguar la suerte de los dos anteriores. Ella le dijo que no sabía que había pasado con los otros. Que ellos habían hablado con fulano, se habían ido, y que no les había vuelto a ver. Le dijo también que sería mejor que se fuera porque no quería que su cónyuge le encontrara en casa. Pero el hermano respondió que quería conocer al marido y que por eso se quedaría allí escondido. Pero este hermano había venido acompañado de un amigo y había traído unos perros, que dejó escondidos con su amigo afuera, dándole a éste instrucciones de que los dejara libres si estuviesen inquietos, ya que era posible que él estuviera luchando en ese momento con una fiera o algo parecido. Cuando el esposo volvió, dijo: "Ah, me huele a carne humana." Entonces sucedió lo mismo que anteriormente, solo que el diablo no pudo comer al tercer hermano, ya que éste opuso resistencia y se lanzó a una lucha. En ese momento los perros se pusieron inquietos y fueron soltados. Éstos corrieron hacia el lugar de la lucha y mataron al diablo, el cuál a su vez pudo matar a dos de los perros antes de caer inerte. Falleciendo éste, aparecieron los dos primeros hermanos. Una vez juntos, los tres hermanos buscaron a su hermana y se la llevaron a su casa.

Este cuento recuerda motivos de cuentos de hadas europeos. Encontrar aquí una moral directa, sin inventar, parece imposible. El fin principal parece ser el entretenimiento. Existe una versión de este cuento bastante diferente que tiene además mucho más elementos mágicos. Ésta recopiló Escalante al comienzo de los años

cincuenta.[14] Podría mencionarse el número tres que también juega un papel importante en algunas historias rescatadas por Aquiles Escalante en Palenque.[15]

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[14]Cf. Aquiles Escalante, op. cit., p. 93-95.
[15]Cf. Aquiles Escalante, op. cit., p. 93-105.

The Fiction of Women's Power. Discourses on Family and the Role of Women in Fishing Communities of the Ciénaga Grande[1]

Juliana Ströbele-Gregor (Berlin)

If you listen to the conversations of the fishermen in the villages along the Atlantic coast of Colombia, especially in the region of the Ciénaga Grande de Santa Marta, women's research should be a very satisfying task: There you will find the matriarchy.

Men energetically emphasize the power of women and their position of power within the family, and they stress their influence in the community. The assertion, "We live in a matriarchy" is widespread.

Women, however, characterize their position as less powerful.

When they speak about their life, their responsibility for the household and children's education, their talent for organization, and their eloquence as well as their perseverance play a predominant role. They also admit to economic dependence, however, and complain about sexual infidelity and unstable partner relationships which go along with the irresponsibility of the partner towards his wife and children. Yet the women see themselves as the "stronger ones" ("somos las más fuertes"). They say that masculine power lies in their physical strength, while women dispose of more intelligence.

Even though these women live under different conditions, they do not see themselves as victims. Rather, they always stress their power.

Indeed, the women are self-confident. Elderly women enjoy respect, and in certain areas of public life, the presence of women is evident. Actual everyday life, however, does not give the impression that the leadership in the community lies in the hands of women. This extreme gap between everyday life and widely accepted ideology makes it necessary to seek the causes, the significance and the functions of such discourse so obviously divergent from reality.

Some brief descriptions of the structure of the economy and the family, and their presuppositions in the specific environment should help one to understand the concept and the importance of the family from the perspective of both men and women.

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[1]This article is based on the study conducted in the communities of the Ciénaga Grande from October to November 1992 within the German-Columbian ecological project PRO-CIENAGA (Freiberg-Strauß 1989; Ströbele-Gregor 1993).

In the following section we shall deal with the gender-specific role assigned to women in fishing communities in order to analyze the function of masculine discourse about "matriarchal conditions".

The fishing communities in the Ciénaga Grande are located along inland waters in a delta landscape with a big silty lagoon separated from the Atlantic Ocean by a dike that was built in the sixties.

In former times, the inland waters were full of fish, but since human intervention has repeatedly interfered with the complex ecological system, the waters are no longer in balance, and the system has started degenerating.

Thus, the economic situation of the fisher families living in three lake dwellers' villages and four villages located along the overland road at the dike, is rapidly worsening.[2] The situation varies from village to village, however. The fishers engage in small-scale fishing in the inland waters for their own consumption as well as for commercial purposes. The infrastructural advantage of the villages along the road comes to bear in commercial pursuits.

Fishing takes place as an economic activity at the family level, yet the income is so low that not every fisher owns a boat. The narrow wooden canoes can accommodate only two persons, and only a few have outboard motors. It is common practice – even within the family (e.g. between son and father) – to rent a boat in exchange for a share of the catch or of the sales.

This dependence of sons on the father represents the father's social security, especially when the father is elderly.

The importance of the type of family economy in which operational and household spheres are interrelated cannot be overestimated (Freiberg-Strauß 1989:59). This is because a different type of dependence and reliance exists between family members of an extended three-generation family and between relatives than between individual fishers and those who rent boats, or dealers. The families in the road villages can diversify their source of income to a certain extent because of their location.

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[2] According to the census of 1985, 16,500 persons lived within the seven fishing communities; 4,200 persons were working as fishers. About 67% of the fisher families lived in the four villages located along the coastal road between Santa Marta and Barranquilla: Pueblo Viejo, Tasajeras, Isla del Rosrio and Palmira and 33% live in the three Palafitte villages of Boca de Cataca, Buenavista and Nueva Venezia (El Morro). The birth-rate is about 3.5% and is above the national average. On the average, 500 persons leave the villages every year, especially the Palafitte villages. This is due to the limited economic options within the villages. The average size of the nuclear family is relatively large. Women have 4.7 children on the average, which means that a large number of women give birth to between 8 and 12 children.

Fishing for the local market (crab catch, oysters) provides one additional income source; commerce and narcotics traffic (very common at the coast) provides another. These socio-economic structures were not without consequences for the social structure, ways of life, and the living conditions of families, and women in particular.

In these villages, the degree of violence within and beyond the family is much greater than in the lake-dwellers' villages. The break-up of families and the existence of a female head of household are also more prevalent. The existence of local markets and the road offers women the possibility of having their own income, thus enabling survival, even if at a poverty level, if their partner leaves them.

The residents of the lake-dwellers' villages have always maintained relations with the coastal villages, since some of them came from there.

Recent migration triggered by the catastrophic environmental conditions in the delta has led to an extension of the network of relationships, even as far as the city of Barranquilla.

As far as economic strategies are concerned, this extended network plays an essential role in both types of villages, since commerce and exchange, and cooperation in all kinds of enterprises occur predominantly within the framework of the family and the networks of *compadrazgo.* This is the case since these are the only relations considered reliable. Mutual help and support is also expected only from the family.

Having relatives in the town who can provide accomodation for students is a prerequisite for them to continue school or vocational training outside of the village. This is especially true for girls. Therefore it is important to take good care of family bonds.

Preserving family networks is in general important for both men and women. It is not surprising, therefore, that men as well as women lay constant emphasis on consanguinity, since they consider it their social capital (Bourdieu).

Even though family bonds are linked with confidence and economy for both men and women, their interests lie partly in different spheres. This is expressed in the way they talk about the family. Women frequently stress the emotional relationship with parents and brothers and sisters.

And indeed: For the women in the lake-dwellers' villages their relationship with the parents or their brothers has an entirely specific significance. This situation is in turn the result of the social division of labor and the social construction of the role of women in the fishing communities.

Ecology of space and the property conditions in the delta (arable land is owned by large landowners), determine the forms of reproduction in a Marxist sense.

Particularly in the lake-dwellers' villages, there is complete dependence on the small-scale inland fishing carried out by the men (Zapata 1979; Freiberg-Strauß 1989).

The traditional living patterns, born out of a fishing economy, determine the gender-specific division of labor and its organizational structures. The men are responsible for the family income and for securing the subsistence, the women for the household, care of small children, and education of the daughters. An expression of the "modern" way of life in the villages is the high estimation of education equivalent to school attendance and vocational training.

The education of girls is especially encouraged, while school attendance of the boys is interrupted when the father needs help in the boat.

Parents like if their daughters have a chance to receive vocational training. However, only the typical female professions are taken into account, that is nursing, teaching, selling.

Since only those with helpful relatives in town can start a vocational training, only very few daughters can take advantage of this opportunity. This difference in social capital gives these families more prestige.

The households in the lake-dwellers' villages are mainly three-generation households composed of several families. The house-community includes the unmarried children, even of adult age, and one or two married sons with their families, if they cannot afford a house or a boat of their own. In addition, a widowed daughter, or a daughter left by her partner frequently lives there with her children. They all live according to the patrilocal residence pattern, under the rule of the father, that is, the owner of the house.

The role of the male head of the household resembles the role of the patriarch from the colonial tradition more than the one of the father in European-type nuclear family. Despite the poverty, this economic predominance of the man, the house structure, and the authority of the patriarch lends special weight to the male role, even though the organization of everyday life within the family is solely the woman's task.

A paramount characteristic of the women of the fisher villages is their identification with the family. The main reason for this is doubtless that in adopting their specific gender role, the women also integrate an attitude of family orientation and a sense of duty towards the family. Since this role has been adopted in the course of a socialization process in a home atmosphere that is seen as friendly, relatively free of repression, and harmonious to many women, this role obviously assumes a positive emotional connotation. On the other hand, the consanguine family is the only place of refuge and security for women if their partner leaves them and the children, which often occurs.

Marriage-like relations or marriages are contracted very fast and at a very young age. Children present no obstacle if a man chooses to leave his wife, in particular if there was no formal marriage contract. Frequently, men have several sex relationships at the same time, which understandably leads to conflicts. In the case of separation, the woman usually has no other choice but to take upon herself the care of the children. In such situations, she can at best expect support and protection from her own family.

Within the framework of the socio-economic conditions as they exist in the lake-dwellers' villages, in which the women have no possibilities of gainful employment and usually have no vocational qualifications that would permit economic independence, their original family is a necessary guarantor of security. And it is the easiest and most preferable way of resolving problems. The organization of joint economic operations in a three-generation household enables the smooth reintegration of the daughter.

As we have seen, the fisher family, understood as a three-generation household, has fundamental economic importance. And this is true to the same extent for both women and men, even though, as already shown, for different purposes. As long as fishing is by far the only means of subsistence, the stability of the family is maintained. Where other economic factors supplement the family-based inland water fishing economy, the family begins to lose its cohesive force. One can see this in the coastal villages. Ideologies do not change, however, as fast as structures. The fishermen of the coastal villages also hold on to the family ideology, even though the behavior of many of them no longer corresponds to the family norms.

The definition of the female role in the fisher families corresponds basically with patriarchal structures. In cases where women are the heads of the family, they hold their position not due to their power, but because of the fact that men do not comply the family norms that they themselves propagate. What is it then, that makes men speak of the "matriarchy"? Men substantiate their assertions as follows:

- "Women have the say in the family. They have the authority in all essential matters; they organize everyday life".
- "Women are more educated; they are more eloquent. When they hold a public office, they do it with responsibility and perseverance".

These statements are certainly true. They are not evidence, however, of either the "power" of women, or the recognition of equal rights for women.

Discourse on women's power obviously has multiple functions which can sometimes be totally contradictory. The image of a woman as a powerful

mother is used in the families as a symbol and serves as an ideologically stabilizing factor for the institution "family", which in turn is of basic importance for the fishing economy. It also serves men, however, as an instrument in legitimizing sexual freedom, withdrawal from responsibility, and neglect of unpopular, time-consuming, and obviously unpleasant duties that go along with family and community life. However, the men retain their control and the power of decision.

Within the myth of the family, the myth of the woman as an ever-caring mother, responsible for managing the household affairs and bound to the family, is ideologized as women's nature.

The myth of masculinity is ambivalent: The man is the head of the household, responsible for the prosperity of the family, but he is also the strong, independent man who yields to his sexual desires, and his urge for freedom. Maintaining the myth of their specific gender role and leaving the domains of family and household to the women, men relinquish many duties and responsibilities. New developments in social life, e.g. the demand for school education, or even a higher degree of formal education, is easily integrated into the argument of legitimation. Men argue that ceding family matters to the women is acceptable, since they are "naturally" more suited to organization of household and family, and also because the women frequently attend school longer, making them more competent.

Therefore, numerous tasks in the community sector are willingly ceded to women, as long as these concern "traditional" women's areas: health, social matters, education. From the point of view of the fishermen, community life plays only a secondary role, since the decisive structures are those of family and kinship, as well as social networks built up by the individual.

From the point of view of the men and the family, conceding formal education to the women means adornment, prestige, and no loss of power for the man. School education on a low level neither enables the women to question the man's position of economic power, nor does it endanger his status.

For the women, this "classical" division of labor, linked with the economic predominance of the men, represents a type of "law of nature".

Women consider men's relinquishing of public tasks as an acknowledgement of their abilities. Informal economic activities requiring little educational training, e.g. selling home-made juices or *tamales* (cornmeal) do not represent essential criteria for special prestige, but are more the expression of economic need and boredom. In this respect the men do not strive for these activities, and do not consider them a sphere of competition for status.

Many women suspect that discourse on women's power hides the interests of men in legitimation. However, they enjoy the seductive deception. The women agree with the fiction. The consequence of the assignment of power is the construction of influence and prestige, however, without generating any real power. The women accept their gender roles as a law of nature. They are captives of the gender role assignment acquired in their socialization. They remain captives as long as the role assignment in everyday life is confirmed time and again, and as long as they regard the situation as an agreeable one.

Once the economic situation changes radically and the type of family based on the three-generation household loses its economic foundation, the specific assignment of women's gender role inside the family loses its function. When this happens women will stop giving their consent.

We can observe just that in the coastal villages. In contrast to the lake-dwellers' villages, small-scale fishing no longer predominates here. This undermines the traditional rationality for the stable family, which is a precondition for the position of the women.

In the coastal villages, fishing is complemented by greater integration in the market. Additional possibilities for gainful employment come from commerce, production, the service sector, or even from illegal business. Men also try to find employment in the city of Barranquilla and – at least temporarily – migrate there without their families. As a result, the family relationship loosens considerably and the role of the women changes. There, single-parent families headed by women are more common; in families headed by a male, tension and violence of men against women and children are on the rise.[3]

Women feel the effects of the fact that the three-generation household loses its economic base, and therefore, even the cohesive force of the family and the relatively safe position of women disappears. "Women's power" here signifies something different: increasing responsibility and an additional burden for women, who assume the functions of both head of the family and salary provider. Especially where women manage the stringent demands of everyday life, they also develop a more critical attitude regarding the definition of gender roles, as well as how to deal with male discourse concerning "the matriachy".

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[3]This follows from discussions that I had in 1992 in counseling centers, with guidance counselors of the Technical College in the city of Ciénaga, as well as with heads of day care centers (madres comunitarias) in the coastal villages.

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From an Oral Tradition to an Oral Literature Vicissitudes of Texts in Papiamentu (Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao)[1]

Aart G. Broek (Willemstad, Curaçao)

Just like any other society in the New World, Curaçao, Aruba and Bonaire boast a long tradition of texts which were handed down orally. Stories, songs, tales, proverbs, rhymes, riddles, jokes, aphorisms, (ritual) formulas, slogans, recipes and the like have come down to us from earlier centuries. Quite some of these texts had travelled seas, surviving the Middle Passage with their treasurers, and were adapted to local circumstances. Others originated on the islands or were adaptations of texts from elsewhere in the Americas or from Europe.

Only by the end of the last century do we find some rare attempts at recording texts from the oral tradition, such as Jesurun 1899. The scarcity of recordings will have to be interpreted as particular realisations of indifference or scorn,[2] but may also be indicative of the extent to which the oral tradition was still a living tradition round the turn of the century. The oral tradition seems to have been so much part of everyday life that one just did not think of it as something particularly interesting or something that needed recording and/or closer investigation. During the eight-day vigil held after the death of a person - the so-called 'ocho dia' - stories were told, songs sung and riddles propounded. All types of

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[2]This is particularly true of the *tambú* - the word refers to a drum as well as to the music, songs, dance and social gathering that go with it. The tambú - which has strong African links - was an important means to severely criticize the slave-holders, plantation life and everything related to this system, while the songs and dancing would often also have strong erotic undertones. After the abolition of slavery the tambú retained these functions. It was forbidden by law to organize or participate in tambú parties until far into this century (on which Juliana 1983 and Rosalia 1983). Especially these last twenty years the tambú has been subjected to rapid commercialization - yet retaining quite some of its critical stand - and has become essential to many a dance performance for both tourists and the local audience.

songs were handed down during pastime pleasures, especially at the end of the year, and during work such as digging ditches, working in the fields and while harvesting. Children are also known to have had their share as listeners in story-telling sessions in the early evening.

When in the first decades of this century the editor of the Roman Catholic weekly *La Cruz* at times asked its readers to contribute proverbs in Papiamentu, the local creole language, he would publish those that nicely corroborated - or at least did not defy – particular Roman Catholic moral principles. Willem E. Kroon (1886-1949), the author of half a dozen thesis-novels in Papiamentu, would extensively deploy local proverbs for the same reason. His novel *Castigo di un abuso* (*Castigation of an Abuse* 29/30]), to give but one example, abounds with proverbs to bring home his Roman Catholic message. The mission's particular concern with proverbs ultimately resulted in a collection of over one thousand 'proverbionan papiamento' (Anon. [= Nic. van Meeteren ?] 1946), presented in alphabetical order and in other respects indiscriminately put together.

By that time, however, the interest in recording the oral tradition had become a tangible need and was no longer primarily nourished by religious motives. From the 1920s on this tradition was rapidly undermined and replaced by modern means of communication. This actually constituted but one of the many sweeping consequences of the rapid socio-economic and cultural changes that the arrival of the oil-refineries on Curaçao, between 1915 and 1918, and on Aruba, between 1924 and 1932, triggered. In 1937 a father of the Dominican Order, M.D. Latour, warned that,

> 'it was high time to record the remnants [of the texts from the oral tradition], for any delay entailed that soon there would be no more authorities and good story-tellers left.' *(Amigoe di Curaçao,* May 1, 1937)[3]

Latour set himself to record Anansi stories and published over two dozen of *kuentanan di Nanzi* in the direct predecessor of the *New West Indian Guide,* viz. *de West-Indische Gids* (1937-1940). Unfortunately he did so in Dutch, forgetting (?) to leave us the original versions in Papiamentu. As Latour certainly did not favour the moral of the stories (on which Latour 1948), this missionary's concern for a dying tradition was clearly not motivated by religious interests in the first place.

His contributions to the *West Indische Gids* will partly have been a response to a particular academic demand from the colonial mother country for articles on the folklore and oral tradition from its Caribbean territo-

[3]Originally in Dutch: '[...] het hoog tijd werd om de laatste brokstukken [van mondeling overgeleverde teksten] te verzamelen, want wie nog langer wacht, zal spoedig vergeefs naar kenners en goede vertellers zoeken.' This and other translations by present author.

ries. The volumes of those years contain an extraordinary number of articles about Afro-Caribbean cultural phenomena in Surinam and the Dutch Antilles. However, in addition, or, perhaps in the first place, a certain local distrust of contemporary developments and of strong European socio-cultural influences - especially of a non-religious kind - also underscored the necessity to record the Afro-Antillean folk-lore and oral tradition before they would be washed away completely. Without succumbing to a romanticized view of the Afro-Antillean past and heritage, father Latour, and after him, father Paul Brenneker, Elis Juliana, Nicolaas van Meeteren, Antoine Maduro, May Henriquez, René Rosalia, Rose Mary Allen and Mario Dijkhoff - to mention the best known - dedicated years to careful recording of the 'remnants' in writing and/or on tape. Their activities resulted in quite some socio-historical, anthropological, linguistic and lexicographical publications.[4]

The distrust which initially accompanied the more or less academic interest in the gradually disappearing oral tradition and folklore was motivated by van Meeteren as follows.

> '[Those who are genuinely interested] do not look down upon the old cultural manifestations as if they were threadbare clothes that need to be replaced by new ones as soon as possible; they do not see them as belonging to a backward people, but try to press far into the soul of that group to investigate if they, despite years of isolation and, on our islands, also of enslavement, do not possess something valuable, in order to protect this against a definite ruination and to preserve it for posterity. In our times of high-speed traffic and cinemas the destruction of old morales and values takes place surprisingly quickly: a few decades suffice to annihilate an old culture, while it takes centuries to build a new one. [...]
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> Therefore, it is high time to record and to preserve for posterity the little that is left on our islands of old customs and habits, traditions, stories and national costumes, but, more particularly, we should try and retain whatever has a spiritual value and of which we can be certain that it has grown out of the people in due course of time.' (Van Meeteren 1977 [1947]: 15/6)[5]

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[4]For their publications in the field of folklore and the oral tradition see the bibliography. Except for Henriquez (1988 and 1991), which are concerned with the traditional Jewish-Sephardic use of Papiamentu, and Dijkhoff (1991), which deals with proverbs from Aruba, the publications virtually all cover the Afro-Antillean oral tradition only.

[5]Originally in Dutch: '[De werkelijk belangstellenden] zien niet met verachting neer op oude cultuurvormen als op een versleten kledingstuk, dat men zoo

As by the middle of this century many, if not most of the older Afro-Curaçaoan cultural manifestations were disappearing or had already disappeared, it became evident that the remnants should be captured in writing, especially in order to retain the 'virtuous' aspects. Not only Latour, but also Van Meeteren could be very explicit in what was worth retaining and what should be improved upon.[6] However, disapproval - in all probability an acceptable reason to ignore folk culture in earlier decades - did not imply anymore that it should not be recorded in writing and, somewhat later, on tape. It did imply that it should be heavily commented on and be discredited when necessary. Written recordings in the 1930s and 1940s show this tendency most clearly.[7] In the course of the following decades this explicit 'debunking' gradually becomes less pronounced and virtually disappears - as in the case of Allen, Dijkhoff, Henriquez, Juliana and Maduro. As such this is indicative of the gradual emancipation of the Afro-Antillean people and their life-styles. Wider, unbiased acceptance should also partly be attributed to the requirements of scientific studies, such as is the case in Hoetink (1958), a socio-historical study of 19th-century Curaçao society and example-setting in many respects. However, up to this very moment, an underlying motive for research in the local folklore may be particularly the assumption that something valuable can be learned for our present times and that these valuable aspects require special attention - see, for an example, Boelbaai 1990:4.

After the Second World War, disdain for the oral tradition and folklore may gradually have been replaced by a more detached approach and ultimately by a fairly favourable assessment, it has taken decades to hesitantly value the oral tradition as an art-form, viz. as a specific realisation of literature.

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spoedig mogelijk door een nieuwe moet vervangen, zij zien die vormen niet als behoorende tot een achterlijke massa, maar trachten door te dringen tot de ziel van de groep om te onderzoeken of zij, niettegenstaande jaren van afzondering en op onze eilanden ook van knechting, op cultureel gebied niets waardevols bezit, om deze te beschermen tegen een wissen ondergang en voor het nageslacht te bewaren. De vernietiging van alle oude waarden gaat in onze dagen van snelverkeer en bioscoop verbazend snel: een paar decennia is voldoende om een oude cultuur weg te vagen, terwijl een nieuw opbouwen eeuwen vereischt. [...]

Het is daarom hoog tijd, dat het weinige, wat er op onze eilanden nog over is aan traditie, overleveringen, sprookjes, oude kleederdrachten en gebruiken worden vastgelegd en voor het nageslacht bewaard, maar vooral dient getracht om alles waarvan met zekerheid kan worden gezegd, dat het een historisch gegroeide, uit het volk geboren, geestelijke waarde is, te handhaven.'

[6]See particularly Van Meeteren 1977 [1947]: 74, 45/6, 186, 190/1, 196.

[7]This is evident in De Pool 1935, on which Broek 1988/9.

In the context of this article 'literature' is considered to refer to those texts - in writing or orally handed down - that are presented and/or received as such at a particular time, at a particular place by a particular group of people - for details see Broek 1993b and 1994].

Arguing from their point of view, neither father Latour nor Van Meeteren nor any of the other researchers mentioned so far were recording 'literature' while working on the conservation of the oral tradition in writing. The oral tradition was one manifestation of the Afro-Curaçaoan way of life that was vanishing. As such it required their attention, while their activities satisfied particular anthropological, historical or linguistic interests and requirements. Their 'concept of literature' - i.e. the idea(l)s with reference to the nature and function of literature - would not allow such texts as the Anansi-stories, the *charadanan* (riddles) or the tambú- and harvest songs to be valued as having any literary qualities.

The first, minor references to the oral tradition as appertaining to the realm of literature date from the early 1940s, viz. Engels (1942) and Man (1944). Engels - an influential artist, poet and editor of the literary magazine *De Stoep* (1940-1951) - thinks of the Anansi-stories, work- and tumbasongs in terms of 'the first manifestations of literature in Curaçao' (Engels 1942: 3), but fails to be more detailed or to give any detailed examples. De Man - a Dutch radio journalist who stayed in Curaçao during the last two of the war years - is very definite about the high quality of the music and the songtexts on the island and speaks of *folk-art* (see Broek 1993c for particulars). He is not more detailed either, but, by speaking of folk art, he roughly indicated the framework within which the oral tradition would be assessed the following decades, viz. a manifestation of art, indeed, but then of the *folk,* the common Afro-Antillean people. In the fifties this idea would be subjected to some refinement, which, however, has not lost much of its range yet.

Cola Debrot - (b. Bonaire 1902 - d. Netherlands 1981), influential author of prose, poetry and literary criticism both in the Netherlands Antilles and in the Netherlands - published the first comprehensive article on the multilingual literature from the Netherlands Antilles. He did so in the opening issue of the literary magazine *Antilliaanse Cahiers* (1955 - 1967), of which he was one of the editors. The article was an extended version of an earlier essay (Debrot 1953), which in its turn had been a speech on Dutch Antillean literature which he delivered various times in the early 1950s. He was to rewrite this essay several times, also in English (Debrot 1964), and for the last time in 1977. He contributed the entries on literature to the first encyclopedia of the Netherlands Antilles (Hoetink [ed.] 1969), which were, after Debrot's death, expanded quite in line with his views for the second edition of the encyclopedia (De Palm [ed.] 1985). In all, for over thirty-five years this writing of Debrot's was

to guide literary criticism on the multilingual literary output from the Dutch Antilles.

At first sight Debrot seems to embrace the oral tradition in Papiamentu as a literary phenomenon of quite some import. Debrot chooses to work with 'the conventional distinction between folk-literature and literature as an art-form' (Debrot 1955: 6).[8] As, except for Engels and De Man, hardly anyone on the islands had given it a thought, there was little reason to speak of 'conventional' in the context of the islandic literature. This rather manipulative trait characterizes Debrot's discussion of the oral tradition as a whole. Debrot continues by distinguishing several categories of popular literature and gives examples of each of them - many from the twentieth century. Rounding off this part of his essay, he remarks,

> 'Folk literature, that *at present has fallen into a state of disgrace and gradually turns into the genre of popular amusement,* flourished in the days before emancipation in 1863.' (Debrot 1955: 20; my emphasis, AGB)[9]

Hereby Debrot gracefully disqualifies the examples from the twentieth century he had just given and turns the oral tradition into something practically non-existent. It is all very fine to state that the oral tradition flourished more than a hundred years earlier, but little is actually known, as virtually nothing was recorded in those pre-twentieth-century days. So actual assessment is impossible. The 'remnants' of yonder days are allegedly fine examples of folk-art, or rather, are indicative of an extinct 'treasure' which may be seen as an art-form. The art of the people has actually been replaced by the literary art which is written - in the Dutch Antilles in Spanish, English, Dutch and Papiamentu - and which is indeed available. Consequently, the remaining and greater part of Debrot's lengthy essay is dedicated to this literary writing.

This reluctance to fully accept the oral tradition, including modern realizations, as a literary phenomenon is easily discernable in the literary critical practice of the following forty years.[10] It is not far-fetched to state that by literary scholars and critics *lip service* has been paid to the

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[8]In the English version Debrot speaks of 'an elementary distinction' (Debrot 1964: 3).

[9]Originally in Dutch: 'De bloei van de volksliteratuur, die *op het ogenblik ongetwijfeld in déconfiture verkeert en langzaam overgaat in het genre populaire amusementsliteratuur,* moet men zoeken in de tijd van voor de emancipatie in 1863.'

[10]Besides Debrot's own essays, see, for instance, Martinus Arion 1958, Labega 1959, de Palm 1968, Lim (ed.) 1968, Habibe 1970, Lauffer (ed.) 1971, Lauffer 1976, Joubert 1976(a), Wal and Van Wel 1980, Palm 1985, Heuvel and Van Wel 1989.

oral tradition. Critics tend to state that there used to be a folk-art, at times give a rhyme and riddle, and a story or two and then continue discussing in more detail the literary art in writing. No analysis of rhythm or imagery, of themes and motifs, or any other literary aspect has been presented. Except for the two examples discussed below, no well-documented publications of primary texts have appeared. This is most evident when perusing the numerous pages of the literary, socio-cultural and related magazines the Dutch Leeward Islands have produced since the early forties: *De Stoep, Lux, Gydelcra, Simadán, Antillano, Eldorado, Social y Cultura, Antilliaanse Cahiers, Christoffel, Cadushi, Pika, Culturele Kroniek, Vitó, Kambio, Watapana, Ruku, Kitoki, Brindis, Krow* and *Kristòf.* Only rarely would a critic actually deny Debrot's views.[11] On the whole, literary criticism would not defy his assertion and would just state, generally without providing any tangible argument, that there had been a folk-art or -literature and it would next leave behind a few examples from the oral tradition.

Nevertheless, some consolidation and standardization did take place, but the folk art as a whole was to remain within the shadow of literary writing - up to today and despite changes in nomenclature. The term 'folk literature' slowly fell into oblivion in the course of the 1960s and 1970s, and was gradually replaced by the term 'oral literature', while more recently the term 'orature' is at times used. This verbal change is to be attributed to international discussions in this field and less to a substantial and tangible rise in the literary status as such.

As for the consolidation of oral literature, in 1970 Elis Juliana published a substantial collection of verbally recorded stories of old women and men from Curaçao. Repetitions, striking phrases, hesitations, archaic words, imagery and tunes form an integral part of this appealing collection. He had been working on this collection since the early 1960s and was actually acting up to what Debrot had only suggested. With the aid of the Dutch Foundation for Cultural Cooperation between Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles (Sticusa), a Dutch literary publisher was found willing to publish his collection, which is completely in Papiamentu. A thousand copies were printed, which were sold in the following decade. As no reprint has appeared on the market, the book has become

[11]Such as Zielinski (1965), when he states, 'I think that Cola Debrot has gone mad. [...] Cola's folk literature does not exist. The only valuable traditions we have in the Antilles are the Anansi-stories and one or two songs that has stood the tooth of ages.' (Ik geloof dat Cola Debrot op hol geslagen is. [...] Cola's volksliteratuur bestaat niet. De enige overleveringen van waarde die wij op de Antillen hebben, dat zijn de Nanzi-verhalen en een enkel lied dat de tijd weerstaan heeft). Zielinski's is a rare case, indeed.

a collector's item rather than a readily available classic of oral literature in Papiamentu.

In the late 1970s the same Dutch organisation that backed Juliana, Sticusa, also provided funds to highlight a collection of a dozen songs in Papiamentu that were composed in the early forties by three young men - Jules de Palm, Pierre Lauffer and René de Rooy - and who together took on the name of Julio Perrenal. The songs (poems) and the creative process that brought them into being are quite in line with the oral tradition. Not surprisingly the songs were not considered to have any literary status at the time of their origin and this would not change during the following decades (Broek 1990). However, since this publication about Julio Perrenal by De Palm (1979), these songs/poems, more than any other, old or more recent, example from the oral tradition, have been awarded a place within the literary realm in Papiamentu.

Besides these two tangible examples, there is, indeed, a collection of Anansi-stories by Nilda Pinto, even dating from just before the first version of Debrot's essay on Dutch Antillean literature. It has been reprinted various times and, after the publication of Debrot's essay in *Antilliaanse Cahiers* (1955), it became the most solid point of reference in literary criticism where oral literature is concerned. The collection has even been translated into English (Geerdink-Jesurun Pinto 1972). Nevertheless nobody has bothered so far to edit an edition with all Anansi-stories available on tape, in manuscript, or published one way or another, neither has any institution shown the initiative to back necessary research to accomplish this. It should also be taken into account that Pinto's collection was the result in writing of a series of programmes for children on the local radio (Curom). Nilda Pinto does not seem to have had the idea of being at work in the litarary field. She presented her personal versions of the age-old Anansi stories, without bothering to record in detail and as accurately as possible versions she had heard from people her senior in many years. The Anansi-stories had fully lost the function they originally had in the days of slavery (on which Schweitz 1980, De Roo 1977, Muller 1977 and others) and which they seem to have lost quite rapidly after the abolition of slavery (on which Broek 1988). The Anansi-stories, like most other old-time stories that were not lost, had become children's reading matter[12], of which the literariness more often than not was of little or no importance.

On Aruba the Afro-Caribbean heritage is quite limited. Before the influx of labourers from the smaller West Indian islands at the end of the

[12]Such as are to be found in Garmers 1955, [1956], [1957] and 1960. Also see Rutgers (1988: 243-265) on texts from the oral tradition as children's reading matter.

1930s and following decades the population primarily consisted of Indian descendents and of descendents of miscegenation with little or no African or Afro-Caribbean blood. From the early 1960s on, the Indian heritage would be emphasized, especially for political reasons. To distinguish itself from Curaçao, the centre of all political decisions, and to claim relative autonomy - that is to say, within the Royal Kingdom of the Netherlands - Aruba stated to treasure its Indian roots, and, in its extremer form, highlighted ethnic differences (see Alofs 1990: 520, 522). In the wake of this political claim the Indian folk-lore could not escape attention. However, these Indian roots would primarily guide new literary texts - also see hereafter - rather than lead to attempts to record and publish these very roots as scientifically justifiably as possible for literary purposes. A defence of the Indian oral tradition as an art-form, as oral literature, is, indeed, hard to find.

The oral tradition may not have gained the same status as the literary art in writing, in the course of the post-war decades it has been allotted a place in the shadow of literary writing. It would be a violation of facts and observations to attribute a more prominent place to oral literature within the literary realm in Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao in the course of the post-war decades. The limited appraisal and esteem seem to have been carried by the following, tentatively formulated factors.

- The replacement of old morales and values, customs and traditions by others was inescapable. The new socio-cultural patterns would not be embraced indiscriminately, as was pointed out earlier, but virtually never would a critique of contemporary developments entail a passionate plea for the return to old times, which could have incorporated a more vehement appeal to treasure the oral tradition. The oral tradition had been embedded in socio-cultural structures which few, if any, of the Antillean people were dying to see revived.[13] Industrialisation of the islands, on the other hand, provided ample opportunities to improve one's socio-economic position. Social mobility implied - as it did and does anywhere else - the loss of behavioural patterns of former days and/or of lower social strata and the acquisition of new patterns. Conservation of old manifestations of the oral tradition must have been one of the behavioural patterns of which most people stripped themselves (which does not imply that new manifestations of the oral tradition would not arise either; see hereafter).
- The first impulses to a reappraisal of the oral tradition as an art-form also seem to have been fed, not so much by a genuine con-

[13]Except some of the former white creole elite, as is apparent from De Pool 1935, on which Broek 1989/90.

cern for the oral tradition as such, but by the desire to oppose Dutch cultural influences and Dutch disdain for Papiamentu (and its speakers). Especially since the early fifties and far into the 1970s a well-structured and institutionalized attempt to strengthen Dutch cultural manifestations - language, literature, education - on the Antillean islands is discernible (Oostindie 1989; Helman/De Roo 1988). Officially a policy of 'exchange' of cultures was defended and, indeed, increasingly room was given to promote local cultural art-forms (which explains the opportunities to publish Juliana's and De Palm's books in the Netherlands in the 1970s[14]). Initially, however, while the written literature in Papiamentu was evidently limited, the oral tradition seems to have been highlighted to add some weight in 'the bartering game'. This support from the oral tradition gradually loses its pertinent character because the body of literary writing in Papiamentu increases in the post-war decades and is given some local institutional backing. Besides, writing in Papiamentu as such came closer to the Western ideal of literature, which in its turn was fed by the success of literary writing in Dutch on the island.

- A third factor may have been that, although the oral tradition used to be an adequate and as such a treasured means to relate to particular socio-cultural and economic patterns of earlier days, the written forms of literature were experienced as better vehicles to cope with post-war reality and its multiplicity of new mores and values. This seems to have been particularly true of the middle class group of readers and of the intellectual elite - however limited their numbers - that decided what was and was not to be valued as literature.
- A fourth factor of importance must have been the 'discovery' of the oral tradition as an almost inexhaustable source for the development of a written literature in Papiamentu. The various realisations of the oral tradition in Papiamentu as such - so with or without the qualification of 'literature' - have been of vital importance for literary writing in the vernacular, especially in Curaçao and Aruba. Post-war literary writing in Papiamentu is inconceivable without the 'exploitation' of the language register of the people in the countryside as known from their storytelling and singing. The rhythm of musical subgenres such as the tambú and the tumba formed the un-

[14]The little attention and money that was dedicated by the Sticusa to the oral tradition, would be allotted to the oral tradition on Curaçao rather than on Aruba or Bonaire. This is indicative of the dominant role that Curaçao played in many ways and which fed the separatist-movement on Aruba - cf. earlier remarks on Aruba.

wavering basis of a series of invaluable poems (on which Van Putte 1989 and 1992, also see Joubert 1976 and Muller 1976). Old nurseries settled in engaging poetry, and so did the vivid and at times sharply edged imagery from the tambú and the *banderitas*[15].

Existing stories and, on Aruba, Indian mythology were retold in writing and presented to readers. The mournful tone of dirges sung at funerals, everyday euphemisms deployed in moments of discord (on which Clemencia 1989) and even expressive slanging matches found their way into literary writing in Papiamentu of generally appreciated high quality. Deploying the oral tradition as beacons, as starting point, as moulds, as continuous threads or even as backbones of writing in Papiamentu seems to be indicative of the attitude which said, generally silently, that actually by cultivating the oral tradition into particular forms of writing 'literature as an art-form' is created.[16] It seems that the linguistic, rhythmic and aesthetic heritage which formed the oral tradition could not be a literary aim in itself and a fruitful source of inspiration at the same time.

However, in the process of revaluation of the oral tradition something else has been involved as well. The remnants of the oral tradition may not have been attributed substantial literary qualities and functions and, on the other hand, these may have inspired a substantial literary output, but all this does not mean that the old-time realisations of the oral tradition, or what is left of it, do not yet function anymore in other ways, so outside the realm of literary appreciation and interpretation. The oral tradition still functions as the body of texts researchers of various scientific disciplines thrive on (see above). Besides, quite some stories from the oral tradition have found their way into books for young children (also cf. above) and various old-time ring-games and -songs have retained a place in the children's playworld. What is more, especially a fairly large number of old-time songs have been subjected to a process of musical

[15] *Banderitas* - literally: small flag - are aphoristic or critical, rhyming statements, generally of a few lines, more often than not referring to topical issues, regularly based on lines from a popular tambú song. These statements were written or printed on small coloured flags, especially at the turn of the year (which was also the tambú season). The habit of doing so seems to have originated after emancipation and lasted until the last decade before the Second World War.

[16] This, however, does not imply that the texts are meant to be read only. On the contrary, especially those texts that are a cultivation of aspects from the oral tradition lend themselves admirably to the purpose of life performance (radio, television, book presentations, cultural manifestations, private gatherings and the like). More often than not these very texts are better known on the islands by such performances than by reading.

reinterpretations - up to this very moment. Not only have particular musical subgenres like the tumba and the tambú - both where the text and the music are concerned - been subjected to further development, but old texts are continually reinterpreted and given new arrangements. Having lost their traditional contexts and function the texts are clad in a present-day jacket, recorded on CD and presented life at concert-halls, open air manifestations, hotels, public and private parties, at official openings, on radio and TV. Such presentations with a dominant recreational and at times a mildly critical element are widely appreciated and generally felt to be *di nos* (ours, i.e. of Afro-Antillean or of Aruban heritage).

These popular and modern realisations of the oral tradition - more appealing to the general public than a stilted and more or less academic presentation as oral 'literature' in print could be - have not as yet found a wide acceptance as a particular form of *literature.* Yet, these past few years, more specifically in Curaçao, the oral tradition in its present-day realisations and its performers - who generally do not belong to the higher socio-economic strata of society - have at times been credited with meritorious *literary* qualities.

In November 1992 a symposium was dedicated to the texts and music of the extremely popular composer and pianist Rignald Recordino, leader of the band Doble R. The speakers - amongst whom three literary authors, viz. Elis Juliana, Frank Martinus Arion and Maria Diwan - did not shrink away from mild criticism but were generally applauding Recordino's qualities and did not deny his texts' literary merits. That same year, during the Third International Caribbean Women Writers' Conference on Curaçao, a woman-singer from the island, Petronilia (Petoi) Coco, was awarded a prize for her numerous contributions to the tradition of oral literature. At the occasion her achievements were emphatically praised as having 'literary' qualities. The same conference yielded a book publication on womanhood in Curaçao. One of the articles is a deliberate reassessment of the tambú-songs by Elia Isenia as a highly artistic, literary achievement (Clemencia 1992).

This tendency is given quite some institutional backing by governmental organizations such as the Instituto Nashonal di Idioma (formerly, Sede di Papiamentu) and the Department of Culture. The more recent governmental policy in the literary and cultural arena, as well as elsewhere, tends to have populist traits: at least, the three examples corroborate this impression. But on the other hand, this tendency is not free from an influence that also played a role in the fifties. The demand for literary texts in Papiamentu has increased considerably during this past decade for a reason quite different from the one in the fifties: the local vernacular is given a place in the educational system. One of the major objections to the use of Papiamentu at schools is the lack of sufficient literary texts in

the vernacular. The production in literary writing in Papiamentu remains limited, certainly does not cover the demand. Recent attention shifting to the oral tradition somewhat more than it did also seems to be fed by this practical exigency: there does not seem to be enough literature in the native tongue, but that is because we tend to overlook the oral tradition, i.e. our oral literature in Papiamentu.

Besides, under the influence of the international feminist movement and of related theories in literature, the 'demand' by some critics for women 'writers' in Papiamentu has increased considerably. Again, the number of women writers is limited, and so is their production, and, what is more, their work does not necessarily yield standards that are ideologically compatible with feminism. The oral tradition and its women performers, indeed, do provide alternatives.

All this, however, cannot take away the image of an oral tradition in Papiamentu that has been given far less literary critical attention than literary writing in Papiamentu these past fifty years. On Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao the transfer from an oral tradition to an oral literature has been a reluctant one so far.

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III

Literature: Histories and History

Ténériffe, Martinique – André Breton et l'expérience des îles: un rapprochement herméneutique?

Susanne Klengel (Halle)

La rencontre des surréalistes avec les mondes dits "exotiques" est un phénomène qui a provoqué jusqu'à aujourd'hui beaucoup de commentaires. La discussion, assez polémique parfois, se fonde sur des documents littéraires et artistiques à première vue bien connus et sur leur réception. Quelques-uns de ces textes et d'autres documents résistent néanmoins à une classification trop rapide selon les modèles de représentation donnés, en raison de leur forme hybride et du mélange de différents genres et disciplines. Parfois, ils ont, en outre, une valeur documentaire parce qu'ils permettent, notamment du fait des descriptions et remarques sur les mondes inconnus qu'ils renferment, de nouvelles conclusions par rapport à l'esthétique du surréalisme même. Cette esthétique, qui a d'une manière subversive mis en question des traditions centrales de l'art, me semble représenter un geste important d'ouverture précisément aux univers culturellement *autres*. Elle fut néanmoins condamnée parfois trop facilement et s'est vue reprocher d'être un regard "exotiste" ou un regard filtré par des "lunettes surréalistes".

Le travail suivant présente donc un essai de reconsidération de cette esthétique surréaliste plutôt qu'une tentative pour découvrir des histoires "vraies" ou "fausses" écrites par les surréalistes sur l'Ile de Ténériffe et la Martinique. L'appréciation du surréalisme par l'écrivain mexicain Carlos Fuentes va dans le même sens:

> Je crois que le surréalisme est l'un des derniers grands courants universels de sensibilité et de création. Le surréalisme permet la confluence de très nombreuses choses, et l'on ne peut pas dire, malgré les grands théoriciens comme Breton, qu'il s'agisse d'un phénomène français: curieusement les grands créateurs du surréalisme furent des étrangers [...] De tous les côtés, nous voyons cette capacité du surréalisme à précipiter des faits de la culture européenne et universelle, qui sans cela n'auraient pu se réaliser pleinement, il me semble.[1]

[1] Carlos Fuentes à l'occasion d'un entretien avec Marc Cheymol in Bataillon / Giraud 1986: 118.

I

Isla cofre mítico est le titre d'un livre de poésie en prose du peintre espagnol Eugenio Granell, publié en tirage limité en 1951 à Puerto Rico (Granell (1951) 1988). Granell esquisse dans ce livre une mythologie des îles qui dérive de l'histoire et de l'imaginaire occidentaux et culmine dans sa version personnelle de ce que représente le topos de l'île dans la perspective des surréalistes: "Este es el libro de una isla. Este es el libro de una isla situada en medio de la ruta que une un antiguo mito, casi esfumado, y la aparición de un mito nuevo que ya se hace sentir. Este libro es el libro anticipador del nuevo mito" (ibid.: 103). Dans ce texte où l'auteur fait plusieurs fois allusion aux observations faites par André Breton à l'occasion de ses séjours sur les îles de Ténériffe, de la Martinique ou la Bonaventure à la Gaspésie canadienne, Granell reprend l'idée du "mythe nouveau" évoquée depuis un certain temps par la pensée surréaliste et, en particulier, par André Breton dans ses *Prolégomènes à un troisième manifeste du surréalisme ou non* (1942) ou encore, à l'occasion de l'importante exposition surréaliste dans la Galerie Maeght en 1947. Comme nul autre surréaliste, Granell en appliqua le potentiel mythique et le discours idéalisant surréalistes au topos de l'île considérée comme *l'autre* côté des continents, *l'Autre* de la civilisation, comme le réservoir de l'innocence, de l'authenticité et de la féminité.

Ce discours idéalisant sur les îles ne diminua pas cependant au contact de la réalité. Bien au contraire: Il fait partie d'un vaste répertoire d'expériences dans des régions et des univers culturels inconnus jusque-là des surréalistes et qu'ils avaient commencé à connaître à partir des années 30, notamment au cours de leurs voyages parfois labyrinthiques à destination de l'exil américain.

Dans leurs textes sur ces nouvelles réalités américaines s'inscrit, néanmoins, une certaine ambivalence marquée par la présence, d'un côté, de figures de discours idéalisantes et à la fois utopiques – ce qui constitue sans doute un élément central dans l'imaginaire et l'esthétique surréalistes –, de l'autre, de figures de discours qui relèvent de l'herméneutique et peuvent être définies comme anti-utopiques. Je reviendrai plus loin sur cette ambivalence.[2]

Le discours idéalisant-utopique dans le surréalisme s'intègre d'une certaine manière dans une longue tradition où l'Amérique est considérée comme réalisation d'une utopie européenne, d'un autre monde, meilleur, plus proche de la nature, comme *l'autre* de l'Europe. En relèvent, par

[2]Les observations suivantes sont liées à une étude plus vaste que j'ai dédiée aux différents "discours américains" que l'on peut distinguer chez les surréalistes; cf. Klengel 1994.

exemple, les mythes d'une culture autochtone intacte qu'Antonin Artaud désirait (re-)découvrir au Mexique – pour mieux critiquer la société occidentale. En font partie aussi les concepts d'une société et de cultures humaines dans le Nouveau Monde qui, du fait de leur jeunesse et de leur innocence, sont considérées comme meilleures que les cultures de la "vieille et décadente Europe". En 1931, ces idées sont très clairement exprimées dans une enquête du journal *Imán* intitulée "Conocimiento de América Latina" et adressée à certains intellectuels européens, parmi lesquels Philippe Soupault, Roger Vitrac, Michel Leiris, Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, Georges Bataille et autres. Les réponses, imprégnées souvent d'échos "spengleriens" d'une "décadence de l'Occident", montrent que ces intellectuels étaient bien conscients de leur manque de connaissances concrètes sur ce continent ainsi que du danger de reproduire des stéréotypes folkloriques. Le lecteur se rend compte cependant qu'il y a un "reste" qui se fond sur un "merveilleux" inexplicable attribué à l'essence même du Nouveau Monde. Au discours utopique se joint aussi l'idée d'une "charge poétique", qu'elle soit inscrite dans un masque *inuit* ou une poupée *katchina,* dans le paysage mexicain ou la végétation martiniquaise. L'existence d'une révélation, d'un moment d'illumination dans lequel éclaterait cette charge poétique pour se communiquer à des personnes qui y sont sensibles tient du "discours utopique" constitutif de l'expérience et de l'esthétique surréalistes.

Ce regard surréaliste a provoqué des critiques parfois sévères: La fameuse phrase de Breton sur le Mexique ("México tiende a ser el lugar surrealista por excelencia"),[3] par exemple, fut abondamment reprise et reproduite jusqu'à aujourd'hui, souvent dans un sens auto-ironique et à propos de situations absolument détachées, dans la plupart des cas, du contexte original. Domingo Pérez-Minik, dans son livre *Facción española surrealista de Tenerife* de 1975, parle d'un grand malentendu entre les intellectuels canariens et leurs invités parisiens qui, selon l'auteur, avaient surtout vu l'île comme un "locus amoenus" et se contentaient de constater que Ténériffe était une "île surréaliste". Les intellectuels et artistes canariens, en revanche, avaient espéré rencontrer des représentants d'un des mouvements d'avant-garde internationaliste, esthétiquement et politiquement avancé. Dans le cas des Antilles, René Ménil, ancien collaborateur de la revue *Tropiques,* reproche à Breton un comportement paternaliste et traditionnel.[4] On pourrait citer de nombreux exemples d'une telle cri-

[3]Réponse donnée par Breton lors de sa visite au Mexique à la question du journaliste Rafael Heliodoro Valle "¿Hay un México surrealista?"; cf. Valle (1938) 1986: 120-1.

[4]En se référant surtout à la préface "Un grand poète noir" qui précède l'édition parisienne du *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* en 1947, Ménil écrit par exemple: "...la préface de Breton peut être lue et jouée [...] sur le mode

tique de ces gestes d' "appropriation" comme celle – pour en mentionner une dernière – du Mexicain Carlos Monsiváis, un écrivain et théoricien de la culture très sensible, qui néanmoins attribue aux surréalistes en voyage au Mexique un comportement "néocolonialiste" (Monsiváis 1985: 229). Bien que ces critiques soient parfois bien trop faciles, il importe de ne pas les négliger car elles reflètent aujourd'hui les lignes d'argumentation d'un vaste débat international sur le "culturellement autre" et s'inscrivent dans une mise en cause de certains discours hégémoniques de l'Occident considérés comme autoritaires.[5]

II

Dans le vaste champ des relations entre l'Ancien et le Nouveau Monde, il semble que l'Amérique soit devenue une sorte de métaphore par laquelle on parvient bien à exprimer le sujet de l'altérité dans sa complexité. Tzvetan Todorov y avait apporté une contribution fondamentale avec son livre *La conquête de l'Amérique. La question de l'autre* en 1982. Carlos Fuentes, de son côté, a relu récemment, dans un essai à la fois critique et conciliant, l'histoire de cette relation de 500 ans entre l'Ancien et le Nouveau Monde comme un système complexe de miroitement, comme un jeu réciproque d'images réelles et phantasmatiques (Fuentes 1992). Le débat sur l'altérité qui, aujourd'hui, n'a rien perdu de son actualité, ainsi que les analyses de l'image du propre et de l'autre et l'analyse du processus d'hybridation culturelle se trouvent au centre de travaux récents.[6] Dans ce contexte, les expériences surréalistes prennent une signification ambivalente.

Walter Benjamin fut probablement le premier à avoir clairement reconnu dans son article sur le surréalisme en 1929 la multiplicité des attitudes dans les activités surréalistes (Benjamin [1929] 1977). Son concept d'"illumination profane" exprime, entre autres, une sorte d'admiration pour le geste surréaliste face au quotidien. Benjamin y voit une façon de découvrir et de faire éclater les énergies révolutionnaires ensevelies dans les choses apparemment banales par un regard qui transforme leur signifi-

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théâtral d'une mise en scène avec deux acteurs, dont l'un (Breton) parle [...] et l'autre est parlé (Césaire)", Ménil 1981: 211.

[5] Ces débats sur l'altérité qui se basent très largement sur des arguments philosophiques ont pris, justement aux Amériques, une tonalité plus politique pendant les années 80.

[6] Cf. p.ex. Todorov 1989, García Canclini 1990, Gruzinski 1990 et les auteurs d'une "anthropologie postmoderne", cf. p.ex. la compilation de textes d'auteurs comme Clifford Geertz, Dennis Tedlock, Stephen Tyler, George E. Marcus et Dick E. Cushman, James Clifford et autres par Carlos Reynoso (ed.) 1991.

cation convenue. De cet étrange matérialisme qui caractérise, selon lui, le regard des flâneurs surréalistes sur l'"espace corporel" ("Leibraum") de la ville, Benjamin attend la péripétie qui mènera à la révolution sociale. Il existe cependant un processus et un mouvement qui précèdent cette "illumination" et, par conséquent, cette explosion révolutionnaire. Le moment de la "soudaineté" et de la révélation d'une métamorphose merveilleuse comme le subit Aragon dans le Passage de l'Opéra, par exemple, ne se produit qu'à condition et à partir d'un abandon physique à l'espace de la ville. Cet espace se constitue donc grâce aux promenades, grâce aux flâneries dans la "périphérie" du centre urbain (cf. p.ex. Bancquart 1972 et Stierle 1986). Par conséquent, il ne suffit pas de voir au cours de l'analyse la découverte ou redécouverte surréaliste des choses et objets (au fond connus) sous l'aspect de métamorphose et de distanciation dans le seul but de souligner le moment de l'"illumination profane" ou le moment des péripéties et de libération d'énergies révolutionnaires. Dans les flâneries surréalistes, bien avant qu'il ne "se passe" quelque chose,[7] le véritable acte subversif consiste en la pratique d'une "ethnographie du quotidien".[8] L'anthropologue et théoricien de la culture américain James Clifford a contribué à l'élaboration de ce concept par son terme assez discuté, d'ailleurs, de "surréalisme ethnographique".[9] Il avoue qu'il s'agissait pour lui dès le début d'une "construction utopique" qu'il essaie de rendre productive en vue d'une redéfinition de la catégorie de "culture". Clifford relie les activités de la fragmentation (qui constitue aujourd'hui l'une des caractéristiques centrales d'une pensée qui met en doute chaque idée "totalisante") avec les avant-gardes historiques (y compris toutes les expériences relevant du collage, du montage, de la juxtaposition de matériaux et autres). Clifford opère donc, entre autre, une nouvelle lecture du surréalisme, pour pouvoir mieux situer son concept de "culture". Dans ses textes, il part d'un déplacement de la dite "autorité ethnographique" qui a eu lieu, selon lui, au XX^{e} siècle: On ne parvient plus vraiment à situer les positions du sujet qui observe (l'ethnologue) et de l'objet de l'observation car l'autorité ethnographique doit être partagée avec l'ancien "objet" ethnologique qui maintenant se présente aussi comme sujet qui observe. Des questions comme "Qui a l'autorité de par-

[7] Dans le livre *Nadja* d'André Breton on lit: "On peut, en attendant, être sûr de me rencontrer dans Paris, de ne pas passer plus de trois jours sans me voir aller et venir, vers la fin de l'après-midi, boulevard Bonne-Nouvelle [...] je ne sais pourquoi c'est là, en effet, que mes pas me portent, que je me rends presque toujours sans but déterminé, sans rien de décidant que cette donnée obscure, à savoir que c'est là que se passera *cela* (?)", in Breton (1928) 1988: 661/663; souligné par Breton.

[8] A propos de ce concept, cf. aussi Fürnkäs 1988:10-87.

[9] "On Ethnographic Surrealism" (1981) in Clifford 1988: 117-151.

ler au nom de l'identité ou de l'authenticité d'un groupe?" et "Quels sont les éléments essentiels et les limites d'une culture?" qui se posent avec une acuité toujours croissante, montrent que les vieilles dichotomies du "propre et de l'autre", de "civilisés et de barbares", du "centre et de la périphérie" doivent être considérées au XX^{e} siècle dans un champ de relations de plus en plus enchevêtrées (Clifford 1988: notamment 8). D'après Clifford, ce "déplacement" est étroitement lié à l'expérience esthétique de la fragmentation et de la recombinaison, comme les avant-gardes l'ont expérimentée. Il soupçonne là une attitude fondamentale qui influence la culture en tant que telle et dont l'importance interdisciplinaire ne se révèle pleinement qu'aujourd'hui. L'exotisme étrange et ambivalent des surréalistes dans l'"espace corporel" de Paris, par exemple sur les marchés aux puces ou aux endroits marginaux que décrit Aragon dans *Le Paysan de Paris,* amène, selon Clifford, à démasquer l'artificialité des ensembles culturels.[10] L'œil surréaliste qui "existe à l'état sauvage" (Breton) abroge les significations convenues, le regard sait révéler les choses dans une autre lumière. Ce regard qui fragmente provoque des métamorphoses, découvre l'insolite dans le quotidien et transforme, d'après Clifford, ce qui est familier, ce qui est connu depuis toujours, en quelque chose d'étrange et met ainsi en question une apparente normalité de l'ensemble culturel. A ce titre, l'activité surréaliste a une similitude structurelle avec la méthode des ethnologues: Le regard de l'investigateur et du scientifique découvre aussi les ensembles culturels comme artificiels, quand il les fragmente avec l'objectif de l'analyse. Un tel regard ethnologique-surréaliste qui déconstruit, dans sa propre société ou dans une autre, la cohérence apparemment naturelle d'une culture et par là même sa revendication d'une tradition et d'une identité, pourrait mener à un "surréalisme ethnographique" qui serait capable de critiquer la culture en général: "Culture appears not as a tradition to be saved but as assembled codes and artifacts always susceptible to critical and creative recombination" (ibid.: 12). Selon lui, ce modèle pourrait, peut-être, fournir des instruments appropriés pour une nouvelle epistémologie ou – telle est l'hypothèse de notre travail – pour une "herméneutique culturelle" dans le cadre de la pensée occidentale qui serait suffisamment ouverte pour laisser à d'autres concepts, aux concepts périphériques et marginaux, leur propre possibilité d'articulation.

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[10] "On Ethnographic Surrealism" in ibid.: p. 117.

III

Quelles conclusions peut-on tirer de ces promenades et explorations dans "l'espace corporel" parisien pour les voyages de quelques-uns des surréalistes dans les régions américaines qui leur étaient inconnues (y compris les Canaries qui font partie des mythes géographiques et de l'*autre* de l'Europe)? La dialectique du propre et de l'autre qui a été expérimentée dans l'espace de Paris par une "herméneutique culturelle" offre les conditions pour un regard plus aigu pendant les voyages dans les régions inconnues et lors des rencontres avec les univers culturels *autres.* En utilisant le terme "herméneutique culturelle", il ne s'agit certainement ni de proclamer une "méthode herméneutique" dont le but serait d'envisager et de constater à tout prix un sens précis et absolu dans l'œuvre ou dans la compréhension de *l'autre,* ni d'une herméneutique qui se limiterait à une herméneutique du texte (écrit). C'est plutôt la mise en valeur du "dialogue" même: la conversation, le dialogue, le fait donc d'entrer en dialogue qui est, selon Hans-Georg Gadamer, le meilleur modèle herméneutique dans lequel le caractère dialogique se développe de la façon la plus évidente. Il s'agit, d'après la position pragmatique de Richard Rorty "to keep the conversation going rather than to find objective truth" (Rorty 1980: 377). C'est donc une dimension d'ouverture face à l'altérité (soit du texte, soit de l'Autre) qui nous a conduits à employer ces prémisses par rapport aux expériences des surréalistes lors de leurs rencontres avec les régions et cultures différentes de la leur. C'est encore Rorty qui inclut dans sa pensée *expressis verbis* des stratégies de rapprochement à l'Autre et à ses discours incommensurables qui s'écartent du travail rigide de la pensée philosophique. Ils font donc partie d'un concept d'herméneutique dans un sens très large qui se rapproche même d'une activité "poétique":

> The attempt to edify (ourselves or others) may consist in the hermeneutic activity of making connections between our own culture and some exotic culture or historical period, or between our own discipline and another discipline which seems to pursue incommensurable aims in an incommensurable vocabulary. But it may instead consist in the "poetic" activity of thinking up such new aims, new words, or new disciplines, followed by, so to speak, the inverse of hermeneutics: the attempt to reinterpret our familiar surroundings in the unfamiliar terms of our new inventions (ibid.: 360).

Par la suite seront examinés deux textes d'André Breton ("Le Château étoilé" et *Martinique, charmeuse de serpents*) dont l'un donne des indices sur un rapprochement herméneutique du paysage de l'Ile de Ténériffe à partir de l'expérience esthétique, tandis que l'autre sera analysé

comme une illustration du principe dialogique à partir du choix du genre textuel.

Dans "Le Château étoilé", écrit peu après la visite d'André Breton, de sa femme et de Benjamin Péret à Ténériffe en 1935, l'Ile de Ténériffe est représentée à travers la "description" d'une ascension au volcan Teide comme un paysage passionné.[11] L'ascension commence sur les plages de sable noir de lave, passe par l'exubérant jardin d'acclimatation d'Orotava, jardin de plantes tropicales aménagé au XVIII^{e} siècle et qui, par sa végétation labyrinthique, se révèle à Breton comme une mystérieuse grotte d'amour. En continuant, le groupe de randonneurs traverse la ceinture de brouillard souvent provoquée par les alizés à une certaine hauteur du volcan. L'ascension s'achève dans une sorte de rêverie pathétique de l'auteur qui aboutit à la vision du "Château étoilé", réminiscence d'une visite au château d'été au nom d'"Etoile" dans les environs de Prague. Le paysage passionné de l'île est le résultat d'une mise en scène du désir toujours croissant qui éclate face au sommet blanc de neige du volcan dans un enchaînement surréaliste d'images dont fait partie l'évocation de la pierre philosophale, symbole de l'androgyne dans l'alchimie médiévale: "Toutes les routes à l'infini, toutes les sources, tous les rayons partent de toi, Deria-i-Noor et Koh-i-Noor, beau pic d'un seul brillant qui trembles! A flanc d'abîme, construit en pierre philosophale, s'ouvre le château étoilé." (Breton [1937] 1975: 108)

Mais ce discours du désir contient des moments où l'on trouve les indices d'une théorie de la perception qui est loin d'être un regard prédéterminé et appropriateur. Au moment du passage par la ceinture de brume, Breton prononce une sorte de "théorie du nuage" sur *l'informe* et *l'indéterminé* qui ont toujours joué un rôle dans l'esthétique surréaliste. En se référant au texte bien connu des surréalistes, le *Trattato* de Léonard de Vinci sur le "vieux mur" avec toutes sortes de taches et de fissures dont la contemplation et l'interprétation devraient stimuler, selon Léonard, la créativité de l'artiste, Breton reprend son discours sur l'indéterminé, sur la sensibilité à ce qui est encore inconnu, qui constitue un élément central de son concept de la *beauté convulsive*. Il y postule une passivité nécessaire, un "état de parfaite réceptivité" qui va jusqu'à la perte ou la dissolution du Moi: "C'est vraiment comme si je m'étais perdu et qu'on vînt tout à coup me donner de mes nouvelles" (Breton 1934: 12). Il rajoute et affirme néanmoins que toutes les interprétations individuelles seraient motivées par le désir et lui seraient dues: "Les objets de la réalité n'existent pas seulement en tant que tels: de la considération des lignes qui composent le plus usuel d'entre eux surgit [...] une remarquable *image-*

[11] In *Minotaure* 8 (1936): 25-39; ce texte constituera un an plus tard le cinquième chapitre du livre *L'amour fou*.

devinette avec laquelle il fait corps et qui nous entretient, sans erreur possible, du seul objet *réel,* actuel, de notre *désir*" (Breton [1937] 1975: 101; souligné par Breton). C'est par cette reformulation psychanalytique de la théorie de Léonard et donc par la justification de toutes les "lectures" dues au désir comme *movens,* que toutes les interprétations deviennent communicables et jouissent d'une autorité dans leur signification. C'est à partir de ce moment-là que la description du paysage de l'île comme paysage passionné – illustration de *l'amour fou* – tire son autorité quasi canonique. Pourtant, si on considère cette passivité du sujet, l'"indifférence" qui est la condition de cette perception, non seulement comme une catégorie psychologique mais aussi comme une catégorie esthétique (cf. Chénieux-Gendron 1993: 27), on peut interpréter cette théorie de la perception plutôt comme une théorie de la lecture qui se base sur un grand spectre de possibilités d'interprétations et de déchiffrements.[12] Loin d'un sens unique produit par le désir comme seule instance légitimante il s'agirait, du point de vue herméneutique, plutôt de souligner l'existence d'un savoir et d'un horizon d'expérience qui produiraient un mouvement de rapprochement et d'éloignement en une sorte de "spirale" qui se mouvrait entre l'interprétation et la production du texte. L'expérience esthétique des lieux, des paysages, des situations vécue par Breton est toujours liée à un dense réseau d'indices intertextuels. Un fonds de savoir, résultat de lectures et d'expériences antérieures et hétérogènes dont il se sert chaque fois d'une manière différente, se trouve à la disposition (voir plus loin). Breton se rapproche ainsi de la situation, des lieux, de l'Autre, sans qu'il y ait un sens obligatoire dès le début. Le sens est toujours en train de naître au contact de ces réalités. Cette ouverture interprétative suggérée par le terme d'"informe" paraît même si large qu'il y a probablement des lectures chaque fois différentes l'une de l'autre dues aux éléments toujours autres qui sont actualisés à partir de ce vaste horizon d'expérience. Il s'agit donc d'une structure de communication ouverte et d'un dialogisme qui ne cherchent pas à trouver à tout prix un *consensus,* mais qui reconnaissent la différence et essaient d'arriver à une compréhension non-prédéterminée. Au delà de l'instance du désir qui semble tout légiti-

[12]Cf. aussi Denis Hollier qui souligne l'ambivalence et l'entrecroisement des catégories de la production et de la réception dans l'écriture surréaliste: "Le trait spécifique de l'écriture surréaliste, qu'elle soit automatique ou autobiographique, c'est en effet moins l'ignorance de sa destination finale en tant que telle, que la position identique que cette ignorance assigne au lecteur et à l'auteur en face d'un texte dont ni l'un ni l'autre ne contrôlent le déroulement, dont ils ignorent l'un et l'autre l'avenir et la fin. Ils sont, l'un et l'autre, auteur et lecteur, du même côté des événements, du même côté de la page. Celui qui écrit n'a aucun privilège, aucune avance sur celui qui lit..."; Denis Hollier: "Précipités surréalistes (à l'ombre du préfixe *sur*)" in Chénieux-Gendron 1993: (29-57) 53.

mer, il s'agit donc de prendre en considération dans le discours de Breton d'autres motifs qui jouent un rôle dans ses modes de lectures. Dans le processus de la lecture, les lieux ne font pas tout de suite partie d'une cartographie fixe comme le serait, par exemple, la cartographie de l'exotisme. Ils ne sont pas considérés dès le début comme éléments d'une image préconçue d'un paysage passionné surréaliste à partir de laquelle se produira le texte. Ces lieux sont toujours en train d'être découverts et déchiffrés comme éléments d'un réseau qui est lui-même en train de se créer. Cela n'est cependant pas un point zéro épistémologique d'où partirait Breton comme pourrait le suggérer la fameuse phrase de son essai sur la peinture: "l'œil existe à l'état sauvage" (Breton [1928] 1979:1) Cette "sauvagerie" du regard surréaliste recèle justement, en raison du riche réservoir de savoirs, la disposition à ne pas regarder ni juger les faits à partir d'un point de vue fixe (qui correspondrait à la position du cartographe), mais la propension à quitter cette position fixe, à se mettre en mouvement pour déchiffrer chaque fois de nouveau. Il ne s'agit pas non plus d'un redéchiffrement d'un texte original mythique et perdu. On pourrait plutôt parler d'une "indétermination"[13] qu'on essaie de réduire peu à peu à l'aide des expériences acquises qui font partie de ce rapprochement dialogique. Le rapprochement bretonien à Ténériffe, "zone ultrasensible", apparaît donc comme un discours qui se constitue à partir d'éléments très hétérogènes: d'intertextes littéraires, scientifiques et artistiques (Baudelaire, le Marquis de Sade, Lewis Carroll, Raymond Roussel, Shakespeare, Freud, la Bible, Max Ernst, Léonard de Vinci et autres), de réflexions philosophiques, d'observations sur la nature et la végétation, de méditations poétiques et d'images surréalistes. La relativisation du désir comme une instance qui serait seule légitimante, amène à l'égalité de droits de toutes sortes de lectures. Cela implique à la fois une conscience de la complexité des expériences et des perceptions, que l'on ne peut reconstituer d'une façon adéquate que par son étendue discursive et non pas en partant de l'idée que la "vérité" se trouve lors d'un moment révélateur. Ainsi peut-on probablement mieux situer les attitudes de certains surréalistes face aux lieux et aux situations inconnus. Du point de vue d'une "herméneutique culturelle", ces regards sont marqués par un horizon spécifique d'expériences mais montrent à la fois la relativité et l'inachèvement du jugement esthétique.

Le deuxième exemple concerne la représentation de la Martinique dans la collection de textes écrits après le séjour de Breton sur l'île au printemps 1941 (et publiés d'abord à divers endroits) qui constituent le livre *Mar-*

[13] "Unbestimmtheit" dans l'esthétique de la réception de Wolfgang Iser; cf. "Die Appellstruktur der Texte" in Warning 1988: 228-250.

tinique, charmeuse de serpents publié en 1948.[14] Il s'agit ici de prendre en considération le genre de texte même que choisit Breton en composant un collage discursif de l'île. Le livre ne présente pas un seul grand récit. Les "histoires" sur la Martinique que Breton transmet ne sont guère que des "histoires surréalistes" sur une Martinique inventée par les surréalistes. Dans l'hétérogénéité des textes qui constituent ce livre se manifestent plutôt des stratégies de dialogue qui amènent à faire connaître une pluralité d'aspects de la vie martiniquaise au début des années 40. Dans sa préface, l'"Avant-dire", Breton, lui-même, croit devoir commenter son discours apparemment déchiré. Son "œil se divise" dit-il, l'œil ouvert se tourne vers la réalité et permet une perception crue des faits sociaux et politiques tandis que l'autre, l'œil fermé, dirige son regard vers l'intérieur et entre en correspondance avec le "monde intérieur", il sait saisir le côté magique, onirique de l'île: "Nous avons été follement séduits et au même temps nous avons été blessés et indignés" (Breton [1948] 1972: 9). Cette tension entre le côté rêveur poétique et le vécu quotidien prosaïque est le point de départ d'un discours enchevêtré et dialogique qui se produit à partir de textes très divers quant à la forme et au contenu. Dans le "Dialogue créole", où se développe une conversation entre André Breton et le peintre André Masson, la "Forêt" forme un espace d'expérience qui s'ouvre du plus profond de son sein au deux partenaires du dialogue – un processus qui s'exprime par des formules comme "la forêt nous enveloppe...", "au *cœur* de la forêt, que j'aime cette expression! oui, notre cœur est au centre de cet enchevêtrement prodigieux!" (ibid.: 17 et 29; souligné par Breton). Le monde végétal de la forêt fournit prétexte à des descriptions à la fois détaillées et poétiques d'un environnement ressenti comme un "délire végétal" labyrinthique. Les observations se lient aux souvenirs de lectures antérieures, elles s'unissent en une réflexion esthétique sur le lieu. La structure du texte, où la figure du dialogue est utilisée explicitement, rend visible la spécificité d'un rapprochement "herméneutique": Les deux protagonistes-auteurs mènent une conversation, ils sont entrés en dialogue entre eux ainsi qu'avec le lieu étrange. Non pas *ex nihilo,* mais en tenant compte de leurs expériences et expectatives, ils cherchent à comprendre et à se situer face aux environs jusque-là inconnus. En raison de la dialogicité inscrite dans l'ensemble des textes qui se veut équilibrée et non-hiérarchique, il est important que l'on ne sache pas tout de suite "qui parle" dans le "Dialogue créole":

[14]A la Martinique, Breton ne se trouve plus dans la position de l'invité privilégié comme aux Canaries, il est, au contraire, un visiteur mal vu par le gouvernement du régime collaborateur et sera d'abord interné dans un camp. Cette situation, entre autres, explique la fragmentation des descriptions, son regard "divisé" sur l'île, comme le disait Breton; cf. Breton (1948) 1972: 7.

Même si le lecteur, à la fin, parvient à identifier les auteurs à partir des contenus de leurs réflexions, cet anonymat primaire qui est conservé à la surface du texte souligne le mouvement en spirale de rapprochement et de distanciation, ce mouvement de la conversation face au lieu, précisément car les deux partenaires ne se montrent pas comme sujets aussitôt identifiables. Une sorte d'exploration spatiale de la forêt se crée de cette manière. Le "Dialogue créole" devient ainsi un paradigme de la dialogicité inscrite dans tous les textes du recueil. Elle facilite le processus de rapprochement esthétique d'une réalité différente et plurielle qui ne peut pas être comprise à partir d'une "révélation" d'images préconçues. Ce rapprochement se prolonge dans les autres parties du recueil. "Les épingles tremblantes" se constituent par l'enchaînement de petites descriptions, textes de la longueur d'une carte postale[15] dédiés à certains lieux et situations qui créent ainsi un panorama poétique de la Martinique. La spatialisation de l'île dans le texte s'exprime clairement dans l'une des "cartes postales" intitulée "Carte de l'île" qui est à la fois poème, cartographie et promenade dans la géographie martiniquaise grâce à une simple énumération de toponymes martiniquais influencés par la langue créole. Le texte "Eaux troubles", cependant, donne des impressions sur la sinistre réalité sociale et politique de l'île à cette époque-là. Le texte dénonce les camps dans lesquels les réfugiés européens sont internés par les représentants du régime de Vichy, il dénonce la pauvreté de la population, la discrimination raciale et la politique de colonisation – c'est une sévère critique sociale et à la fois un document historique sur le climat politique. Dans ce contexte, la rencontre avec Aimé Césaire joue un rôle important. Un grand dialogue commence à la Martinique pour aboutir à un important échange d'idées entre les auteurs de la revue *Tropiques* et les surréalistes. Les articles martiniquais d'André Breton ne peuvent pas être entièrement compris si ses lectures de la revue *Tropiques,* celle du *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* d'Aimé Césaire et l'échange d'idées avec les intellectuels martiniquais ne sont pas pris en considération. Ces lectures et discussions ont contribué a élargir la perspective de Breton, comme cela se reflète dans l'ensemble des textes martiniquais qui constitue son discours plurisémantique sur l'île. En outre, il est évident que le dialogue avec Breton a également changé la perspective du poète martiniquais et la position intellectuelle de la revue *Tropiques.*[16] Les remaniements de

[15]Effectivement, ces textes furent écrits au dos de cartes postales; je dois cette information à Jacqueline Chénieux-Gendron.

[16]Les premiers numéros de *Tropiques* passaient la censure en étant considérés comme une revue culturelle, non-politique et comme expression de la tradition régionaliste. Plus tard, la position de la revue se radicalise aux yeux des officiels et elle est considérée comme subversive. La parution est interdite en mai 1943 (cf. la lettre du Chef du Service de l'Information à Aimé Césaire écrit le 10

son *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* dont Césaire publiait des extraits dans le numéro 5 (avril 42) de *Tropiques* sous le titre "En guise de manifeste littéraire", apportent une tonalité bien différente, plus polémique et provocatrice. En janvier 1942 déjà, Suzanne Césaire avait postulé que la poésie martiniquaise ne devait pas être folklorique: Elle "sera cannibale ou ne sera pas" avait-elle écrit en reprenant la fameuse formule inconditionnelle et dialectique qu'avait utilisée Breton pour définir son concept de la *beauté convulsive.*[17] Dans son *Cahier* remanié, Césaire rapproche la "critique de la rationalité" des surréalistes de "l'autre logique" des Antillais, il souligne d'une façon polémique et ironique la soi-disant "folie" attribuée aux Noirs et aux surréalistes:

> Parce que nous vous haïssons, vous et votre raison, nous nous réclamons de la démence précoce, de la folie flambante, du cannibalisme tenace.
> Comptons: la folie qui se souvient
> la folie qui hurle/ la folie qui voit
> la folie qui se déchaine [...]
> Que 2 et 2 font 5
> que la forêt miaule
> que l'arbre tire les marrons du feu
> que le ciel se lisse la barbe
> et cetera, et cetera ...
> Qui et quels nous sommes? Admirable question![18]

Ces rencontres eurent donc des effets réciproques. Sans le vouloir, peut-être, le recueil *Martinique, charmeuse de serpents* est devenu dans son ensemble un discours métissé, un discours hybride. Le lecteur y trouve des descriptions de paysage, des informations sur l'histoire, sur l'atmosphère politique, des passages de critique sociale et de poésie qui se superposent et dont le résultat n'aboutit pas à une définition précise de l'île ni, par conséquent, à une appropriation de l'inconnu. Non clos, ce témoignage conserve son dynamisme, il reste un rapprochement multiple qui ouvre la possibilité à de nombreuses lectures différentes.[19] Michel Leiris, au retour de son premier séjour aux Caraïbes, écrit dans un compte-rendu

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mai 1943; conservée à la Bibliothéque Nationale, Paris, NAF 1979[2], 45-49). Le numéro suivant 6/7 paraîtra seulement en février 1944 après la mise en place des représentants du *Comité de Libération Française aux Antilles.*

[17]Cf. la dernière phrase de *Nadja* (1928) qui dit: "La beauté sera convulsive ou ne sera pas".

[18]Césaire: "En guise de manifeste littéraire" in *Tropiques* 5, avril 1942: 7-8.

[19]Il faut rappeler une autre "couche" discursive du livre: une sorte de "commentaire" donné au plan visuel par André Masson qui raconte son "histoire" de la Martinique à l'aide d'une série de dessins et d'un petit texte intitulé "Antille".

pour *Les Temps Modernes* en 1949 en faisant l'éloge du livre de Breton et des dessins d'André Masson:

> Pour exprimer les traits essentiels d'un pays, la poésie, le discours comme à batons rompus et le dessin tracé en toute liberté, sans intention naturaliste, s'avèrent ici plus efficaces que la manière descriptive commune à la plupart des spécialistes du récit de voyage, genre, certes, attrayant, mais que son caractère de vue prise du dehors (sans même parler trop de tentants coups de pouce) rend bien souvent fallacieux.[20]

IV

Dans ces textes d'André Breton sur des lieux traditionnellement prédestinés à être idéalisés comme les îles appelées par Breton lui-même des "zones ultrasensibles", il devient évident dans le cas de *Martinique, charmeuse de serpents,* que malgré la forte tendance à l'idéalisation et à l'évocation de mythes de l'île traditionnellement positifs, son regard, ses lectures des lieux et leur textualisation, ont un caractère ouvert. Malgré une certaine rhétorique surréaliste qui dérive directement de la poétologie bretonienne,[21] c'est dans la constellation des textes, dans leur ensemble, qu'ils forment un récit de voyage peu commun en se contredisant, en se complétant, en établissant un réseau de discours différents: poétiques, documentaires, visuels.

Dans une herméneutique, prise littéralement dans son sens large d'"herméneutique de l'altérité", la volonté de comprendre se réfère à l'Autre, à l'être contingent de l'Autre. Il s'agira toujours d'une "vérité relative" puisque la compréhension est toujours relative et due elle-même à l'histoire.

D'où le terme de "rapprochement" utilisé dans notre travail: Il sert à écarter l'illusion d'une éventuelle croyance quasi mythique en une fusion d'horizons "totale" et, par conséquent, l'illusion qu'il y ait un sens précis et obligatoire. Il s'agit plutôt de constater un désir de comprendre l'Autre tout en étant capable d'accepter les limites de la compréhension dues à l'altérité. Cette dimension anthropologique du procédé herméneutique implique l'auto-réflexivité, le désir et la faculté de se mettre en question et de se comprendre soi-même par l'Autre. C'est là que l'herméneutique dans le sens pragmatique d'un Richard Rorty rejoint le "surréalisme ethnographique" de James Clifford, énoncé dans le cadre d'une anthropo-

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[20]Leiris: "Martinique, charmeuse de serpents" (*Les Temps Modernes,* no. 40, fév. 1949) in Leiris 1992: 90.

[21]Cf. p.ex. Michel Riffaterre "Ekphrasis lyrique" in Chénieux-Gendron 1993: 179-198.

logie qui se caractérise par le principe de la réflexion de la subjectivité du chercheur, par le questionnement de "l'autorité ethnographique", ainsi que par le traitement déconstructiviste de l'image du "propre et de l'autre". Le processus mis en route chez les surréalistes à l'occasion de leur rencontre avec les mondes "exotiques", pourrait être décrit comme une herméneutique qui serait une tentative pour approcher ce qu'on voudrait comprendre mais dont on sait déjà l'issue aporétique. C'est cette limite qui provoque toujours un nouveau désir de rapprochement. Ce rapprochement se définit par la processualité de l'expérience, de la lecture, de l'interprétation, de la transformation enfin en œuvres d'art et en poésie. Il joue un rôle important de médiation et ne parvient jamais à sa fin.

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"Un mundo enfermo?" Manuel Zeno Gandía's *La charca* and National Puerto Rican Discourse

Wolfgang Binder (Erlangen)

In his book, *The Spanish American Regional Novel* (1990) Carlos J. Alonso postulates that "the preoccupation with cultural autochthony has operated as an enabling rhetorical formula that has generated cultural discourse in Latin America through its iterative use." (p. 16)

Much of Puerto Rican literature up to the very last years has been shaped by the national traumas: the invasion of the island by the United States of America, broken promises and lost hopes, the enfeebling of the creole elites, the virtual disappearance of agricultural production, i.e. the use of the land by its inhabitants, the limbo of a colonial situation only somewhat alleviated by the construction of the Estado Libre Asociado Muñozista, a model which barely won by a little over two percent in the vote of November 1993. The void of a non-existent nation state, of independence (as illusionary as this may be, given the hard facts of geography and power in the Western hemisphere), has fueled the literary and scholarly production with an understandably persistent intensity.

Manuel Zeno Gandía was born in 1855 in Arecibo the son of a conservative sugar *hacendado* who opposed the abolition of slavery, which came late enough for Puerto Rico – on February 11th, 1873. Zeno, who died in 1930, a few months before an ill-fated man called Pedro Albízu Campos was elected President of the Partido Nacionalista, is indisputably one of the outstanding figures of the Puerto Rican literary canon. In fact, to a considerable degree he, or rather literary critics, can be held responsible for establishing that essentially paternalist canon to this day. (See Gelpí, pp. 6 ff.) In the early 1880s, naturalism as a method, and the work of Emile Zola were being discussed in Puerto Rico. In his preface to Carmela Eulate Sanjurjo's little known novel *La muñeca* (1895), Zeno Gandía wrote:

> "Siempre me atrajo esa admirable facultad que permite al artista hacer realidad. En mis gustos, avanzo todavía un poco más: creo el naturalismo lo único formal, útil y positivamente artístico. [...] hay que analizar las tempestades del alma dentro de la moral y la filosofía y las artes con el naturalismo. Que no se vuelva la cara horrorizada ante la realidad, porque donde quiera que se vuelva se la encuentra y porque si los átomos

> cristalizan a veces en diamante y en oro, las almas se funden también en la verdad, las virtudes y el bien.[...]". (p. 18 f.)

Zeno Gandía's novel *La charca,* his first of a cycle of four – out of eleven that he planned to write – which he called "Crónicas de un mundo enfermo", is generally considered his most successful. It was published in 1894, four years before the North American takeover. He finished his "crónicas" with *Redentores* that got published in installments in the newspaper *El Imparcial* in 1925, which may account for the episodic character of much of the text. It was preceded by *El negocio* (1922) and *El negocio* in turn with a surprisingly long interval by *Garduña* (1896), which had in fact been finished as early as 1890. The two groups of novels are divided by extra-literary sociopolitical facts, a surprisingly long military government given the peaceful surrender and trustful attitude of the Puerto Rican masses, by bitter disappointments of political and economic hopes of the members of the elites to which belonged the medical doctor, politician, journalist, and writer Zeno Gandía. His discourse consequently shifted from a diagnosis couched in dramatic but also in poetic wordings and stratagems in his second group to one of a more clearly political, ideological dimension. In addition, his focus shifts, in the twenties, from a rural world to an urban setting, to a territory where the power structure had moved to. In studying much of what concerns Puerto Rico, one has to be aware of the fact that Puerto Rico was a rather neglected outpost of the Spanish Empire, an island whose history is marked by a continuum of not so obscure desires, i.e. serving as a place of strategic relevance to major powers.

Let me recall that Captain A. T. Mahan from the United States Navy, a man who influenced North American strategic and thus economic thinking in the 1890s and way beyond, wrote eight years before the Spanish Empire crumbled in the Caribbean:

> "Colonies attached to the mother country afford [...] the surest means of supporting abroad the sea power of a country. In peace, the influence of the government should be felt in promoting by all means a warmth of attachment and a unity of interest which will make the welfare of one the welfare of all."

In war, Mahan sees colonies as apt "to provide resting-places for [our ships], where they can coal and repair [...]." (Mahan, p. 83)

North American governors from the start – and I could quote from Governor Charles Allen's *First Annual Report ... Covering the Period From May 1, 1900 to May 1, 1901* – saw Puerto Rico as a "resting-place", a tropical garden that should be tended to vigorously by the energetic Anglo-Saxon race which could bring civilization and morals to the natives, in addition to the English tongue, capital, and democracy. (Allen,

pp. 28 ff., 41) The combination of a divinely ordained "manifest destiny", strategic advantages, imminent enrichment and feelings of racial superiority were irresistable motives indeed for expansionism and colonization.

To give just one example of the malcontentment of Puerto Rican leaders after two years of North American military rule, I will quote from José Julio Henna's speech at one of the Washington hearings (one of the recurring patterns of Puerto Rican - United States relations). Henna, it should be added, had formerly been a separatist when it came to Spain and was now, before the imminent passing of the Foraker Act, an assimilationist of the Puerto Rican Partido Republicano. I quote from the Congressional Records:

> "We must not forget how the American army was received. The houses were opened to them; the people said: 'We are glad to have you here, you are our redeemers. *[sic!]* But instead, [...] the occupation has been a perfect failure. We have suffered everything. No liberty, no rights, absolutely no protection, not even the right to travel. We can not travel today because we can not get passports. We are Mr. Nobody from Nowhere. We have no political status, no civil rights.'" (Henna, p. 116)

Zeno Gandía, a former leader of the Partido Autonomista Histórico, was, along with Henna and Eugenio María Hostos, one of the three commissioners in Washington and presented with Henna the case of Puerto Rico in a series of papers and adjunct letters, published in 1917 as *El Caso de Puerto Rico.* His initial admiration of President McKinley gives increasingly way to double-edged disappointment and bitterness, not only because the American side does not grant the necessary aid he expected, but also because he felt, in contrast to Hostos, let alone Betances, that his own people were inable to support themselves as an independent nation, alone or within a potential Antillean Confederation. In a letter written in 1901 to Manuel Guzman Rodríguez, which was to be published only after his death in 1930 and which refers to his disagreements with Hostos, he states:

> "Yo amo a mi patria y la quisiera independiente para su felicidad; conosco a mis compatriotas y los veo con tristeza incapaces para esa independencia. Conosco la realidad política de los Estados Unidos y creo en absoluto imposible un gobierno temporal para granjear después la independencia de este país." (In: Elena Zeno de Matos, p. 156)

In the same letter and in the same political context and possible paradigms for Puerto Rico's future we find medicinal metaphors that recur in *La charca* and which are part of Zeno Gandía's narrative registers in his diagnosis of Puerto Rican society:

> "[...] del mismo modo que el alcoholismo no puede curarse cortando de pronto el tósigo alcohólico y dar metódicas dosis del veneno es necesario hasta disponer el organismo del enfermo a vivir sin la saturación mortífera, asimismo, en este desdichado cuerpo social no podrá una absoluta curación obtenerse si no se transige metódica y gradualmente con el enfermizo sistema, aparentando seguirle para arrancar al cabo de raíz la viciosa educación que satura nuestro pueblo." (In: Elena Zeno de Matos, p. 151)

In February of 1904, he and Rosendo Matienzo Cintrón founded the Union Party, which wins the elections, has the moderate Luis Muñoz Rivera (as opposed to the later more radical leader and poet José de Diego) as its President and half-heartedly holds up independence as one of its ideals. By the early twenties, Zeno Gandía had distanced himself from the volatile political parties, their coalitions, their fusions, the continuous *bochinche* in Puerto Rican political life (e.g. Unión and Partido Republicano were to merge in 1924).

I do not wish to enter into a discussion of how "naturalistic" *La charca* is; let it suffice to say that I am aware of the fact that there are several naturalisms, that the borders between what has been termed "realism" and "naturalism" are not rigid, that Zola's *Le roman experimental* (1880) and Claude Bernard's *Introduction à l'étude de la médecine expérimentale* were known to Zeno, that Sanz del Río in Spain and krausismo had been instrumental in making French naturalism acceptable in Spain and thus in the Puerto Rico of the 1880s, that Zeno Gandía had read Benito Pérez Galdós' novel *Los desheredados*(1881) and Emilia Pardo Bazán's *La cuestión palpitante*. In much of Zeno Gandía's writing we do note "un autor culto." Amado Nervo's *Perlas negras* had appeared in 1895, and José Santos Chocano had visited Puerto Rico in 1895; during one of his stays in New York, Zeno had met and admired José Martí; he wrote about him in the paper *El Imparcial,* June 11, 1925. He was not only familiar with *modernismo,* he shared its musicality, lyricism, also its preciocity to some degree.

La charca is *grosso modo* peopled by a constellation of three groups: by *jíbaros,* peasants living in the mountains, the *hacendados* Galante and Juan del Salto, the priest Padre Esteban, and the shopkeeper Andújar. Set apart from the mass of the *jíbaros* is Silvina, a fourteen-year-old girl, and her lover Ciro.

With the exception of Padre Esteban and del Salto, life in the mountains is characterized by isolation, misery, greed, violence, unbridled lust and sexual abuse. Very few ethical norms corresponding to a bourgeois morale exist: Leandra, Silvina's mother gave birth to nine children, seven stemmed from different fathers. Her lover occasionally forces Silvina into

sexual practice as well. The auctorial voice speaks of "la libre poligamía del bosque". (p. 4) Both Galante and Gaspar are painted as repugnant bullies, as useless providers. Images comparing them to wild animals abound; Gaspar's "cabezota innoble" reaches monstruous, ape-like dimensions (Alvarez, p. 69); features correspond to inner values or the lack of them, an age-old topos in literature. Zeno Gandía succeeded with the powerful, ruthless, profit-ridden landowner Galante in creating a memorable study of a case of "machismo" which manipulates female lives wherever (mainly) economic needs allow it to reign supreme.

With the well-intentioned Juan del Salto the author tries to balance and to complete his negative portrayal of the "hacendado" caste. Del Salto is a reformist, a meliorist, who reflects upon present surrounding conditions and who is at the same time part of them and distanced from them. He despairs of the *jíbaros'* apathy:

> "sois indiferentes lo mismo para el bien que para el mal; sois apáticos, sois desver [...]." (p. 13)

His brooding reflections lead him to the conclusion that along with sound nutrition and hygiene, education, "escuelas", could be the key to progress, could lead to a refinement of unbridled passions, of alcoholism. If you consult the Puerto Rican historian and sociologist Salvador Brau, his chapter "La campesina" in *Disquisiciones sociológicas*, which precedes *La charca* by roughly a decade, you will read similar arguments. Juan del Salto wavers between highflown ideals and practical steps, a tension which makes him ineffective, a secular version of Padre Esteban. Both are mere "habladores". An interminable discussion about the deplorable state of the "jíbaros" – Padre Esteban calls them "pariahs", – and possible recipes for the malaise in chapter 9, a discussion, in which the doctor Pintado joins, ends with the following remark:

> "Y Juan sumó mentalmente las partidas de café recolectadas aquel día; calculó las que le faltaba recoger; pensó en las probabilidades de buenos precios. Luego pensó en Jacobo." (p. 142)

Del Salto is, after all, a businessman; and he returns to what is dearest to him: to his son, who is pursuing his studies in Spain and is idealizing Puerto Rico from afar. Nothing is done, it is all talk, a privatistic attitude turns out to be finally the only solace. In that same discussion, when the Grito de Lares gets mentioned, that brief, heroic rebellion of September 1868, which remains one of the icons of Puerto Rican nationalism, for once the term "nación" is used; before and after we read *colonia*. It seems evident that the text transcends a mere analysis of *jíbaro* society; it should be read, message-directed as it is, as a negative cultural discourse offering all the same a definition of what Puerto Rico as a whole at that

point in its history represented. It is, *ex negativo,* not a founding myth – what kind of new nation would we have to assume? –, but a highly pessimistic diagnosis of things archaic as they are, or seem to be. We are far away from Manuel A. Alonso's happy *costumbrista Jíbaro* of 1849, with which, in conjunction with the *Agüinaldo Puertorriqueño* (1843) literary historians have let Puerto Rican literature traditionally begin.

Silvina, the young, innocent victim in *La charca,* may well be the incarnation of Puerto Rico. She is, enshrined in a kind of frame, beginning the novel and ending it; her evolution, if the term is appropriate, is that of the Puerto Rican nation as exemplified in the jíbaro community. The two quotes following should also illumine the beauty of Zeno Gandía's rhetoric and, albeit briefly, the symbolism of micro-geography and of nature put to use in this novel. Silvina, who is seventeen at her death, is placed at the cliff, above the river, looking downward:

> "En el borde del barranco, asida a dos árboles para no caer, Silvina se inclinaba sobre la vertiente y miraba con impaciencia allá abajo, al cauce del río, gritando con todas sus fuerzas. Leandra! ...Leandra!" (p. 1)

At the end, after a harrowing story of poverty, exploitation and abuse, she tumbles in an epileptic fit down that *barranco* looking upwards towards a "fringe of light", turns into a bloody mass next to her mother, and falls with part of her body into the river:

> "Allí la víctima, la resultante, el sedimento depositado en bajo fondo social, la maternidad sin alma, la pecadora sin pecado, la culpable sin culpa, la criminal inconsciente, la que, habiendo recibido al nacer el abyecto empujón, había también empujado a los seres que de ella nacieron. [...] En el misterio de la noche, Dios sollozaba. [...] Sólo el río murmurando en aquella soledad de muerte, siempre movedizo, siempre inquieto, siempre sonante, como si arrastrara en su corriente el prolongado lamento de un dolor sin bálsamo, como si llevara disuelto en su linfa el llanto de una desdicha que nadie enjuga, que nadie consuela, ¡que nadie conoce!" (p. 163)

I would not have chosen Zeno Gandía's *La charca* had its ideological trajectory remained an isolated case in Puerto Rican letters. It should be borne in mind that the *jíbaro* has, on the one hand, well into the late nineteen fifties served as a most welcome element, especially to hispanophile, conservative intellectual circles, for the definition of the Puerto Rican national character. It should also be borne in mind that the *jíbaro* as a racial type, is, as a rule, not a mulatto nor an African; he was, as a rule, considered white (whatever that may mean). And I would like to recall, not without some irony, that even in chapter 3 of *La charca* the

lethargy, the sickliness, the paleness, the lack of civilized organization of the "jíbaros" were, in the words of Juan del Salto who tries to contradict Padre Esteban's argument that they have not yet developed "un alma", a result of miscegenation:

> "¡Cuánta mezcla! ¡Qué variedad de círculos tangentes! [...] La raza aborígen fue débil ante el choque, y sucumbió ... Su prole, el tipo hijo de la mezcla, fue engendrado en la desgracia, en el recelo, bajo la sugestión del miedo, en el amplio tálamo de los bosques [...]." (pp. 35 f.)

In 1903, Rosendo Matienzo Cintrón had stated, "Hoy Puerto Rico sólo es una muchedumbre. Pero cuando la muchedumbre puertorriqueña tenga un alma, entonces Puerto Rico ser una patria." (Pedreira, p. 145) The *postmodernista* magazine *Indice* asked in 1929 leading intellectuals to answer the nagging question: "¿Somos, o no somos? ¿Qué somos y cómo somos?" Zeno Gandía's answer sounds particularly disillusioned: "La definición de Puerto Rico a mi juicio, es ésta: una nación en rehenes." And: "Fuimos mejores que somos [...] Generaciones de juventud dispuesta y arrogante aparecen entregadas al culto del Dios Placer: de un placer de plasmación materialista e infecunda." (*Indice*, pp. 58 f.) Antonio S. Pedreira (1899-1939), an important Hispanist and bibliographer, whose stance is severely criticized by intellectuals like Marxist Juan Flores, felt that his answer in *Indice* deserved an amplification in book form, and thus with *Insularismo* (1934) a highly influential book saw the light. Pedreira's hispanophile conservatism, in contrast to Tomás Blanco's *Prontuario Histórico de Puerto Rico* (1935) denigrated the African and the mulatto elements to the benefit of the white *jíbaro,* whom he idealized and elevated to the incarnation of Puerto Ricanness: "El jíbaro – raíz central de nuestra cultura" (p.132). In his 1935 essay "La actualidad del jíbaro" he writes of "la bella calidad representativa" of the archetype. (In: Laguerre y Melón, p. 8.) Pedreira can be considered an important figure of creole "blanqueamiento" of Puerto Rico. (See González; Díaz Quiñones.)

Puerto Rican docility, another myth perpetrated by Pedreira, is, in addition to the loss of the agrarian world taken up by René Marqués, who dominated Puerto Rican letters throughout the fifties and remained influential until his death in 1979, in his furious reply to Kazin, in his dramas, novels and essays. He writes less of the humble *jíbaro,* he sees rather the possession and the laboring of the land as essential for Puerto Rican identity and nationality. Marqués in turn idealizes the *hacendados;* Mariana Bracetti de Rojas in his historical drama *Mariana o el Alba* , which takes up the Grito de Lares, warns before getting executed:

> " 'El trabajo en la hacienda no debe interrumpirse. La tierra ha de labrarse y hacerse producir siempre [...] La tierra es el

único patrimonio de los puertorriqueños. Deberá ser nuestra siempre. Siempre!'" (Marqués, 1968, pp. 206 f.)

And in *Los soles truncos*, one of his most successful dramas, Inés realizes the reason for the loss of the hacienda of Toa Alta: "Tierras que no se trabajan, siempre ser n de los b rbaros" *(ibid.)*. The barbarians, also in the Greek sense, are of course the North Americans.

The topic of the loss of an agrarian world, in particular of the sugar cane plantations, was a vital one, also after René Marqués. We have it – in the guise of parody – in Rosario Ferré's novel *Maldito Amor* (1986), which I have had the pleasure of translating into German, and in Ana Lydia Vega's *Falsas crónicas del sur* (1991), for instance.

All these works are part of a negative cultural discourse beginning with Zeno Gandía's *La charca* and his "Crónicas de un mundo enfermo." The representational character of the "novela de la tierra", its lament of things vanishing, vanished, or not being in good shape rather than their celebration, is nonetheless a relevant constituent of Puerto Rican literary, intellectual and emotional realities. That this tradition is central to the Puerto experience seems evident. That it is, at least since the sixties, with ensuing galloping urbanization and suburbanization and pseudo-industrialization falling increasingly into the hands of eminent historians and sociologists like Fernando Picó, who bring to light facts and interpretations differing from fictonal texts, should not be that surprising. There remains no doubt that this, too, is fascinating.

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The Nightmare of History. Cabrera Infante's *Vista del amanecer en el trópico* As Late Modernist Historical Fiction

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In comparison to *Tres tristes tigres* or *La Habana para un infante defunto* far less attention has been devoted to the research of Cabrera Infante's *Vista del amanecer en el trópico* (1974), a fact which can be appreciated if the relative stylistic simplicity of this book is contrasted with the complexity of *Tres tristes tigres.* The narrative works of Cabrera Infante display a curious stylistic dichotomy; those which explicitly deal with the history and politics of Cuba - *Así en la paz como en la guerra* and *Vista del amanecer en el trópico* - are written in an extremely terse style and, at first glance, incline more towards documentary writings, whereas the apparently apolitical works *Tres tristes tigres* and *La Habana para un infante difunto* are dominated by linguistically whimsical ideas and a more extensive, love-of-detail narrative. The linguistic fancies of *Tres tristes tigres* have, of course, received a great deal of attention in literary criticism, not least because these have secured Cabrera Infante a place among the authors of the so-called 'boom' in Latin American literature. Essays on *Vista del amanecer en el trópico* examine the form of the vignette, a term which Cabrera Infante himself chose for the short, descriptive fragments (Alvarez-Borland 1982: 33-44); they refer to the cyclic character of the underlying concept of history (Gil López 1989: 365-371) and, with reference to Foster (1979), to the ambivalent quality of irony and empathy which pervades the seemingly objective descriptive style of the vignettes (Fox 1986: 147-156). The most extensive essay, Dinorah Hernández Lima's *Versiones y re-versiones históricas en la obra de Cabrera Infante* (1990) interprets - as does Fox, but more briefly - the allusions to Cuban history and analyzes the descriptive technique specific to Cabrera Infante as a return to the 'ekphratic' tradition.[1] In the following discussion I intend to examine more closely the style of this work and illustrate from a more contemporary standpoint the connection between historical interpretation and narrative style.

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[1] *Ekphrasis* is defined as the poetic description of a pictorial or sculptural work of art, see Hernández Lima 1990: 145-153.

The setting of the historical references

From a thematic point of view Cabrera Infante's account of Cuban history is reminiscent of Stephen Daedalus' words: "History (...) is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake".[2] The title of Cabrera Infante's book at first evokes the stereotyped image of the tropics, reminiscent of clichéd picture postcards. In the course of the text, however, the reader learns that daybreak is the hour of execution, of dying in the gutter, of a public firing-squad. The greenness of the tropics appears as "herida verde", a "green wound" (p. 11). Cabrera Infante portrays history as a ritual of death, monotonously, obsessively repeating itself, a nightmare composed of numerous scenes depicting violent death. The main theme of this version of Cuban history, outlined in 101 fragments over 233 pages, is the moment of death of historically known or anonymous actors. The second fragment deals with the subject of the perpetual repetition of oppression. It recalls the oppression of the Siboneye and Taino Indians by the Caribs before the arrival of the Spaniards. Cabrera Infante sees no indication, therefore, of a happy prehistoric situation, even at the beginning, that is before the Conquista's 'sin'. At the same time this fragment shows that, in the compilation of the historical material, certain details are treated ironically, e.g. when quoting the Conquistadors' concern that the Indios could suffer injury from their frequent personal grooming - an opinion which, in view of the subsequent genocide, for which Cabrera Infante provides substantiating figures, has a particularly grotesque impact.[3] The historic deed of the conquest is reduced here to a brief account mainly concerned with the transmittal of diseases. The next fragment is a description in the present tense of an old engraving which depicts an Indio chief (Hatuey) being burnt at the stake. The condensed portrayal of the historic conquest of Cuba is followed, therefore, by a close-up of a singular historical event. The form of the narrative medium - the description of the old engraving as a source of historical recollection - is of particular importance and is used subsequently on several occasions. The following fragment, the shortest of all, consisting of a single question, illustrates

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[2] James Joyce, *Ulysses,* New York 1961, p. 34. I do not wish to claim a direct link between *Ulysses* and *Vista del amanecer en el trópico,* as the two books are written in completely different styles. An approximation to Joyce's style can more easily be perceived in *Tres tristes tigres.*

[3] Fox (1986: 148) points out that ironical treatment is used to effect particularly in the first 39 vignettes, in which Cabrera Infante has used generally well-known, stereotyped historical material which is also to be found in textbooks. Suzanne Jill Levine (1987: 548-553), who has translated *Vista del amanecer en el trópico* into English, quotes from a letter in which Cabrera Infante cites Portuondo's *History of Cuba* as the main source for the vignettes dealing with the colonial era in Cuba.

the brevity of form: "¿En qué otro país del mundo hay una provincia llamada Matanzas?" (p. 19). Although the book has no macrostructure whatsoever, a chronological sequence can be recognized from the historical allusions. The scenes span a period which extends from the arrival of the Siboneye Indians on the island, the Spanish conquest and the independence movement, to the Cuban revolution and the suppression of the anti-Castro opposition; the 99th fragment contains the date 1972.[4]

Documentary or late-modernist literature?

The fragmentary form of the narrative and the complete lack of a narrative macrostructure (in terms of both story and plot) prompted me to describe the book as late-modernist historical fiction. I am referring here not to the conventions of Hispanic literary history, but taking more of a comparative approach. To be more exact, I am taking the line of Linda Hutcheon's *A Poetics of Postmodernism,* which appeared in 1988. Postmodernism, however vague the term may be, is, for the moment, the last global, internationally discussed concept. Linda Hutcheon's approach seems interesting, in particular with regard to the question as to what extent postmodern authors are returning to historical topics. Summarized in a simplified way the postmodern historical novel would be characterized on the one hand by a reversion to narrative macrostructures, going as far as an ironic reflection of the historical novel. On the other hand, however, it would continue to be linked with modernism by the scepsis which classical modernism expressed towards the possibility of a 'faithful' representation and towards the large-scale 19th-century teleological concepts of history. Hutcheon described late-modernist contemporary authors as those still strongly committed to the avant-garde aesthetics of fragmentization and the autonomy of art: she quotes here the French *nouveau roman* and the American surfiction (i.e. Raymond Federman).[5] It would appear, as a whole, relatively difficult to draw a clear dividing line between late-modernist and postmodernist fiction. It could be asserted that Cabrera Infante's book has little to do with the contemporary aesthetic debate since it gives the impression of being documentary literature. It is true that the book contains much verifiable historical material, as can be determined, for example, by a comparison with Hugh Thomas' *Cuba or the pursuit of freedom* (1971). At a reading in Saarbrücken in January 1993 Cabrera Infante explained that the historical material used, which

[4]For further details concerning the historical allusions cf. Fox (1986: 155-156) and Hernández Lima (1990).

[5]Cf. Hutcheon (1988: 52).

extends from pictorial objects (old engravings, photographs), historical texts and anecdotes from newspapers, to word-of-mouth accounts, was authentic. At first glance it would appear as though the material were being conveyed in its natural state, in an untreated form. Striking, however, is the extreme lack of narration in comparison to *Tres tristes tigres* and *La Habana para un infante difunto.* It is not only the complete absence of a plot but the matter-of-fact tone within the fragments, the economy of rhetorical means, the 'objectivity': the stories seem to tell themselves. Since Flaubert's request for "impassibilité", which is displayed here in the extreme, it is also known that the alleged objectivity of narration in literature is a highly artificial process which follows certain aesthetic and ideological intentions. In *Vista del amanecer en el trópico* particular structural and narrative patterns, which clearly underline the divergence of the text in comparison to the narrative of a historian, are also to be found. The first is the anonymous quality of the figures. Whereas any historical representation is interested, for documentary reasons, in identifying historic persons, Cabrera Infante obscures the identity of all the actors. The second lies in the avoidance of any placement of time. The process of identifying with particular historical events, therefore, as opposed to the authentication strategies of the traditional historical novel, is hindered to the extent that it is entirely dependent on the historical knowledge of the reader. The sequence of fixed moments in time is disconnected from any kind of overlying historical structure. In this way the anonymous quality of the figures draws attention to the violence of history. This incorporates for the reader the picture of a never-ending recurrence in history. The combination of the literary representation of the moment with the search for the archetypical, however, is a characteristic of modern aesthetics. It attacks the teleological idea of history, typical for the 19th-century, from two extreme points; from the unit of time, the moment, and from an ahistorical concept of duration. Hayden White examined the connection between the teleological philosophy of history and the narrative plot in his well-known study *Metahistory* and in *The Content of the Form.* Unfortunately the results to which he came cannot be directly applied to Cabrera Infante. In the debate on the connection between historiographical and literary portrayals of history the basis taken, as a rule, is a model of the narrative, which is oriented to the 19th century realistic novel, i.e. to the linear narrative and plot structures, and not applicable for books such as *Vista del amanecer en el trópico.* For contemporary authors the correlation of narrative form and historical concept respectively must be analyzed for each one separately, whereby a number of important studies, such as those published by Ainsa, Balderston, Chang-Rodríguez/G. de Beer and Seymour Menton,

are already available for the Hispano-American novel.[6] Cabrera Infante's examination of history is at a level which lies far ahead of the global concept of history. He reduces it to the existential core of confrontation with violent death, whereby, at the same time, any preceding interpretative concept of history - history as progress or as a decadence movement - is avoided. At times it is clear that he is concerned with treating historical hero-worshipping with irony. In the fragment on the death of José Martí (p. 73) he states that the dead person was very small and that only after being declared a martyr did he grow bigger and bigger and transform himself into an enormous burden for revolutionary consciousness. While this is a satirical allusion to the Martí-worship of the Castro regime, at other times the rhetoric, which is linked with historic events, is ironically emphasized: in the description of the proclamation of the independence of Cuba it is said: "es no sólo un día radiante sino promisorio - pero esto no se ve en la fotografía" (p. 91). Seen as a whole, the narrative situation appears to imitate the perception of a historian who is sitting in front of and describing a number of material sources - a historian who is either innocent, i.e. who has not yet developed a hypothesis, or who is resigned and, after all interpretative drafts have proved empty, sees only death at work in history. The narrator, as a sceptic compiler of various sources, modifies his own narrative again and again, in that he points out the uncertainty of the truth of the stories narrated and formulates hypotheses of probability. From both the subject of the omnipresent, senseless and often absurd presence of violent death in Cuban history, and from the matter-of-fact stylistic form, the book can be regarded as an attempt to commit to paper the repression of death in historiography and ideology. In respect of Cabrera Infante's anti-Castro stance, it is natural to suspect that this is a literary criticism of Marxist progressive thinking. This is backed up by the fact that Cabrera Infante describes the treatment of the adversaries, frequently former revolutionaries, as the last stage, for the moment, in Cuban history: fragment 100 is written as a transcription of an accusatory speech, in which the mother of Pedro Luis Boitel, a former revolutionary and subsequent prisoner of the Castro regime, reports that the body of her son was not surrendered to her.[7] This direct historical reference should not be given too much emphasis, however, as it constitutes an exception. In all other cases Cabrera Infante

[6] In my study *Die Fiktion der Geschichte. Zur Konstruktion und Kritik des Historischen in zeitgenössischen italienischen und hispanoamerikanischen Romanen* (lectureship thesis, Saarbrücken 1994) I have endeavoured to compare some examples of Latin American fiction with Italian and French examples, in order to obtain a more extensive comparative view.

[7] Cabrera Infante's position as a severe critic of Castro's politics is well-known; compare his collection of political statements and essays *Mea Cuba* (1992).

preserves the anonymity of the historical figures and omits any indication of time, thus underlining the difference between *Vista del amanecer en el trópico* and documentary literature. With the reduction of history to a series of isolated moments, the text tends more towards late-modernist literature rather than the postmodern novel which, as the novels of John Fowles for example, plays with the conventions of the historical novel. I intend to illustrate this later by examining the technique which Cabrera Infante defines as "congelar momentos históricos".

History and aesthetics: the technique of 'freezing' historic moments

In his own statements Cabrera Infante emphasized the aesthetic side of the text rather than the political. Dinorah Hernández Lima quotes the following statement from a seminar which Cabrera Infante gave at the University of Virginia:

> "Mi intención al escribir *Vista del amanecer en el trópico* no ha sido política, ni localista, ni histórica, sino estética: sólo he querido reducir la historia a ficción y congelar momentos históricos" (quotation from Hernández Lima 1990: 144).

His aim, therefore, was to transform history into fiction and freeze historic moments. Hernández Lima aptly interpreted the technique of 'freezing' historic moments from the point of view of the spatialization of history. Within this she also includes the many descriptions of visual documentation, i.e. of old engravings and photographs. She analyzes this descriptive technique as a revival of the rhetorical pattern of 'ekphrasis' from the antiquity. Although I do not wish to contradict this, I prefer to take a frame of reference which is nearer to our time. Cabrera Infante's technique of describing old engravings and photographs in minute detail, and his fixed moments of wilful executions indeed produce the effect of frozen pictures. The choice of the present tense to describe these engravings and photographs seems to me to be of less importance here than the complete subordination of action to the description. As far as I know no critical work about *Vista del amanecer en el trópico* has as yet pointed out that the visually-oriented descriptive technique is typical of the *nouveau roman*.[8] In the nouveau roman the intention of describing time as a sequence of isolated moments rather than as a continuum is also clear -

[8]Critics have up to now referred in particular to the connection of *Vista del amanecer en el trópico* to Hemingway's *The Green Hills of Africa*, compare the textual references for the first vignette of the work in Levine (1987). Levine, however, also makes clear that Cabrera Infante dates the influence of Hemingway to the earliest vignettes written in 1963 and disassociates himself from this.

think of the programmatic title of Robbe-Grillet's *Instantanés,* i.e. fixed moments in time. Claude Simon extended this descriptive technique to the portrayal of historic situations. As Robbe-Grillet explained in *Le miroir qui revient* (1984: 10-27, 208-211), this descriptive technique is not simply an experiment relating to aesthetic form, but a form of representation which is appropriate to the obsessive character of the moment portrayed. The supposed coldness of a precise, visually-oriented description makes the scenes described freeze in the reader's perception and probably finds, therefore, a better means of perceiving and remembering traumatic experiences than a portrayal which endeavours to evoke the full emotional participation of the reader. As is known from psychoanalysis, the psyche tries to resist traumatic events by making them non-reality;[9] the isolated, frozen pictures are thus explained in connection with traumatization. The extreme reduction of the narrative means and of any kind of usual macrostructure could, in this case, be interpreted as a creative technique, with which the obsessive quality of a historical vision can be conveyed, which sees every historical act sub specie mortis. Of interest in this respect is a statement of Cabrera Infante quoted by Levine in which he views the originality of his work to be the framing of historic moments in the description of photographs and other visual material ("the originality of paralyzing history in photographs, graphic referents" quotation from Levine 1987: 551). The wording of this also demonstrates the active resistance of the author: history which brings death is, for its part, paralyzed in the writing process. Indications of this technique are shown in identically worded openings "En el grabado se ve ..." (Vignettes 3, 7, 11, 23) or phrases such as that which follows the description of three dead men: "No se mueven porque es una fotografía y porque hace horas que est n muertos y los dejaron allí para escarmiento y miedo" (p. 173). The correspondence incorporated in the phrasal structure between the immobility of the medium, the photograph, and that of death has here the effect of a metanarrative reference to the role of the vignettes, in which descriptions of visual memories (engravings, photographs) merge into descriptions of historic events or scenes. Despite many stylistic differences a proximity can be found here to the technique of Claude Simon, who frequently allows, as in *Les Géorgiques,* historical events to slowly emerge from the description of documents, pictures, engravings, photographs and sculptures. Cabrera Infante can claim a certain legitimation for his idea, as it is concerned with a source-evidenced interpretation of Cuban history. Whether it is informative for historians is another matter. From a literary point of view, however, it can in my opinion be maintained that

[9]Compare, for example, S. Freud, *Der Realitätsverlust bei Neurose und Psychose* (1924).

Cabrera Infante has found a valid aesthetic form for the nightmare vision of history. The writings in *Vista del amanecer en el trópico* might give the impression that the confrontation with history has almost deprived Cabrera Infante of his literary language. A greater stylistic contrast can hardly be imagined as that between *Tres tristes tigres,* with its baroque linguistic games, and *Vista del amanecer en el trópico* with its extreme reduction of the narrative.[10] In *La Habana para un infante difunto* Cabrera Infante even returns to the use of traditional macrostructures in the fictional autobiography. Here also a parallel to the revival of the autobiography in the *nouveau roman* in the 1980's, as in Robbe-Grillet's *Le miroir qui revient,* can be seen. *La Habana para un infante difunto* is an attempt at historical reconstruction sui generis. The nostalgic and humorous work of recollection endeavours here to evoke by literary means the Havanna of the author's youth which, due to exile, is severed from any direct means of perception. This fictional autobiography seems to me to be a counterpoise to *Vista del amanecer en el trópico.* Whereas in that book the vision of death in history goes hand in hand with a condensed narrative, here the recollection of the erotic experiences of youth is accompanied by a sometimes excessively garrulous narrative exuberance. It is noticeable, however, that the new-found joy in narration is only realized in an area which lies beyond the great historical discourse and provides a contrasting world to this. For Cabrera Infante the subject of history is, apparently, incompatible with his well-known linguistic creativity. When reading *Vista del amanecer en el trópico,* we are still far removed from the games which postmodern novels play with historical references and with the conventions of historical representation. On the other hand, how can history be a joking matter for an author who, for more than 25 years, has been living in exile?

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[10] I do not wish to take up the matter of whether *Tres tristes tigres* or *La Habana para un infante difunto,* are apolitical novels. For Siemens (1989), *Tres tristes tigres* is, at a deeper level, a political text that, following Derrida's concept of 'différance', resists the monological character of ideology by creating a multivocal text.

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L'Histoire et les histoires dans le discours littéraire d'Edouard Glissant et de Simone Schwarz-Bart

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Les intellectuels antillais dénoncent sans cesse leur dépendance politique, économique et culturelle de la France. Une telle dépendance se manifeste par un discontinu dans l'Histoire continue, écrite par le colonisateur français.[1] Ce discontinu réel, qu'Edouard Glissant appelle *pans d'histoire,* amène les Antillais à intérioriser leur passé comme *histoire subie.*[2] Au niveau du texte, cette dépendance se manifeste par l'adaptation du discours français. Pour remédier à une telle situation d'aliénation individuelle et collective dans le vécu et le discours antillais, l'écrivain est obligé de créer une nouvelle écriture qui devra transformer *l'observateur* antillais passif en *acteur*, en sujet de son histoire, qui cessera ainsi d'être imposée de l'extérieur. Ce nouveau discours antillais autonome qui correspondra à l'histoire antillaise propre n'existera plus en fonction du discours français. Il aura pour tâche de "se nommer au monde, c'est-à-dire [...] de ne pas disparaître de la scène du monde et de courir au contraire à son élargissement" (Glissant 1981 : 192). Un tel discours s'impose d'urgence pour que la communauté antillaise ne soit pas assimilée par la nation française.

La quête d'une nouvelle écriture

Cette quête d'une nouvelle écriture permettant de nommer l'espace-temps aux Antilles pour reconstruire et revivre une propre histoire antillaise implique le refus du français classique. Il ne s'agit plus maintenant de connaître la place ou le sens des signes français à l'intérieur du système

[1] "Il y a [...] un discontinu réel sous le continu apparent de notre histoire. Le continu apparent, c'est la périodisation de l'histoire de France, [...]. Le discontinu réel tient en ceci qu'à chacune des articulations des périodes [...], l'élément décisif du changement n'est pas décrété par la situation mais décrété de l'extérieur, en fonction d'une autre histoire" (Glissant 1981 : 157).

[2] "Le pan ne redevient période pour l'observateur qu'au moment où la communauté recompose pour elle-même un projet par quoi elle réintègre son passé historique" (Glissant 1981 : 157).

de la langue et de la culture française,[3] mais de définir la place et le sens des signes français dans l'univers antillais. Il importe donc de *désacraliser* les signes français. Aussi Edouard Glissant *thématise*-t-il dans son roman *La case du commandeur* la façon dont quelques uns de ses personnages cherchent à trouver le sens exact des mots français employés aux Antilles. Le personnage romanesque Cinna Chimène par exemple, qui ressent la disparité entre signifiants et signifiés comme un déficit, tente d'établir une relation entre la langue française parlée (code des idées) et son propre vécu (code des actions). L'auteur démontre que Cinna Chimène, en tant qu'Antillaise, se sert des signes français qui, pour elle, ont pourtant d'autres connotations que pour un Français de la Métropole. Il donne entre autres l'exemple du signifiant *vin* qui n'a pas de signifié adéquat pour les paysans antillais, puisque le vin, produit importé de la Métropole, ne fait partie que du vécu antillais des bourgeois. Aussi Cinna Chimène donne-t-elle le sens suivant au mot *vin:* "[...] le vin c'est quand la messe est à midi en plein soleil et te rend fou" (Glissant 1981a : 73). Les implications culturelles que le mot possède pour les Français (telles que la viticulture ou l'art culinaire associés avec le terme *vin)* n'existent pas pour un Antillais,[4] car elles ne correspondent pas au vécu antillais. Le terme *vin*, créé par la langue française, est utilisé par les Antillais comme mythe (dans le sens de Roland Barthes) que l'on ne met pas en question.[5] Cet exemple démontre comment Cinna Chimène, représentante romanesque du peuple antillais, en apprenant la langue française, s'approprie le savoir collectif de la Métropole et acquiert en même temps une conception de la France sans jamais la mettre en question.

Le schéma mental (code des idées) ainsi créé chez les Antillais n'a plus aucun rapport avec le vécu créole (code des actions). Cela signifie que

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[3]Comme le faisaient les auteurs du discours de la blanchitude ou de la négritude.

[4]Dany Bébel-Gisler écrit à propos de "manger à table": "S'asseoir autour d'une table, en famille, pour prendre ses repas, est une coutume importée récemment en Guadeloupe. Elle était réservée aux jours de fête, baptême, communion, mariage. Les jours ordinaires, la mère sert à chacun sa portion dans son assiette. Le père en premier, a droit aux meilleurs morceaux, viennent ensuite les enfants. Souvent, la mère mange plus tard, quand le reste de la famille est parti. Chacun a son coin préféré pour déguster son repas, qui dehors, qui sous la galerie, qui, plus rarement, dans la maison" (Bébel-Gisler 1985 : 302).

[5]La preuve d'une telle mystification du terme *vin* est aussi apportée par Mayotte Capécia (Paris 1948 : 36) lorsqu'elle souligne l'importance des gobelets de cristal pour la mère de sa protagoniste. Les gobelets sont le signe de la culture française et le fait que sa mère les possède prouve qu'elle possède la civilisation française. Si sa mère refuse de se servir des gobelets lors d'une festivité aux Antilles, elle qualifie par là ses invités d'incultes et d'incapables: ils ne sont pas dignes de se servir d'objets faisant partie de la civilisation.

"La survalorisation du côté syntagmatique dans le savoir du colonisé provoque un déséquilibre parfois dramatique: il s'habitue au parallelisme de deux chaînes différentes de syntagmes: une qui règle ses actions et une qui règle ses idées" (Fleischmann 1985 : 164). A cause du parallélisme du code des actions et du code des idées, l'Antillais n'arrive plus à nommer et à analyser sa vie quotidienne. Pour remédier à cette situation, Edouard Glissant fait fuir Cinna Chimène de la société antillaise "civilisée". Elle se réfugie "au ventre inviolé de la forêt [...], le corps peu à peu devenu indivisible de l'entrelacs de verdures où elle baignait [...], les mots chavirés dans son cœur [...]" (Glissant 1981a : 72 sq.) et cherche des signifiants appropriés à dé*signer* et à dé*nommer* son vécu créole. Elle semble perdre son individualité dans la nature au moment où les mots (les mots chavirés dans son cœur) n'ont plus aucun sens pour elle.[6]

Lorsque les mots français, représentant l'ancien ordre des choses, ont perdu leur sens, Cinna Chimène "courait en tous sens à travers sa peur et sa déraison [...] et elle vit les mots défiler au-devant d'elle et la traverser" (Glissant 1981a : 73). Edouard Glissant n'utilise plus un discours logique pour décrire l'état d'esprit de Cinna Chimène, il enchaîne des mots nouvellement créés. Il se sert de mots issus de la langue française, mais il les transforme, ce sont par exemple "la belleté", "deshonoration", "réfléchiment" etc. Dans d'autres cas, l'auteur applique le procédé de la contraction comme pour l'énoncé "tu mas annoncié tifille"; ou encore, il double des mots ou des associations phonétiques comme "vini éti éti icite". Son discours se présente alors sous la forme suivante:

> Poussé Odono la belleté de la bête tu mas annoncié tifille tifille vini éti éti icite ou cé la bête qui a fait l'annoncement ille me froidit son boyau c'est lavenir tifille tifille vini vini étiicite icite a la deshonoration Odono non non il est réfléchiment ou cé la bête (Glissant 1981a : 73 sq.).

Les mots d'un tel discours n'appartiennent plus à la langue française bien qu'ils ressemblent au français et qu'ils soient compréhensibles pour le lecteur francophone. L'auteur a ainsi développé *son propre langage* pour pouvoir décrire la situation particulière aux Antilles.

Edouard Glissant démontre par son nouveau discours que l'ancien ordre des choses n'existe plus. Après le démontage ou la *désacralisation* du sens des mots français et la dissolution du discours logique et rationnel, c'est-à-dire du discours où "les mots de la Farance entraient dans les mots d'ici pour les pousser loin de sa tête" (Glissant 1981a : 78), Cinna Chimène - en tant que porte-parole de l'auteur - se voit obligée de ranger les mots:

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[6]Il en est de même dans le roman *Ti Jean L'horizon* de Simone Schwarz-Bart: la communauté du village s'est dissoute et les gens du Plateau sont devenus partie intégrante de la nature au moment où la communication a cessé.

"mais enfin il faut parler nommer crier héler pour les enfants qui vont partout sans un seul chemin" (Glissant 1981a: 78).

Dans sa tentative d'ordonner la langue *(la sacralisation)*, elle s'adresse au marron et quimboiseur papa Longoué, le gardien de la tradition fragmentaire importée d'Afrique. Par l'intermédiaire de ces deux personnages, Edouard Glissant entame une conversation sur le sens des mots. Le quimboiseur regrette "que les mots en bouche étaient pour mourir qu'on ne trouverait bientôt plus que les mots traduits sur papier" (Glissant 1981a : 78). Les paroles sont pour le quimboiseur et l'auteur[7] les témoins de l'histoire antillaise, "que les descendants allaient pour accrocher les mots sur les branches des chemins" (Glissant 1981a : 78). Papa Longoué recommande donc à Cinna Chimène de se faire pénétrer par les mots (les paroles des anciens) accrochés dans la nature. Elle entend dans la case du quimboiseur les mots des frères Odono, ceux-ci ressemblent aux frères de l'histoire qu'Ozonzo lui avait racontée. Cette histoire de la traite des Africains et de l'esclavage culmine dans la révolte des noirs en Haïti. "Cinna Chimène pensa 'c'est encore des mots venus de loin.' [...] ce n'est pas des mots de Farance c'est des mots d'Ayiti [...]" (Glissant 1981a : 79). Pour elle, les mots de France et ceux d'Haïti appartiennent aux langues étrangères. Ils sont certes en relation avec le passé des Antillais transbordés, mais ils ne sont cependant pas capables de dé*signer* et de dé*nom*mer le vécu antillais. Elle retourne donc chez Ozonzo et Pythagore, son père adoptif.

> Pythagore [...] lui avait raconté que le conte d'Odono était le déguisement d'une histoire plus ancienne. Ayiti n'était pas la terre première, cette terre où, dit-il, tous les gens étaient Odono (Glissant 1981a : 81).

Le quimboiseur et Ozonzo, deux personnages qui vivent en dehors du monde blanc, ont transmis à Cinna Chimène la partie de l'histoire antillaise qui se réfère à l'origine africaine et aux révoltes en Haïti. "Elle tomba, les mots l'enveloppèrent, Longoué rentra dans la case disant qu'à présent elle avait changé de peau" (Glissant 1981a : 80). Ayant compris que la culture et la langue de France, de Haïti et d'Afrique font partie du passé de la société antillaise, Cinna Chimène est alors capable – et par cela elle rappelle le héros Ti Jean de Simone Schwarz-Bart lors de son retour en Guadeloupe – d'organiser elle-même sa vie en tant que sujet de ses actions.

Edouard Glissant en tant qu'auteur utilise donc les termes français de façon très arbitraire: il les *désacralise* et les *sacralise*, pour les adapter au contexte spécifique des Antilles. Mais aucun de ses personnages roma-

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[7] De même que pour Aimé Césaire dans *Le cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, Paris 1939.

nesques ne trouve un langage antillais spécifique qui traduise son vécu et soit accepté dans son espace social. Mathieu a intériorisé les conceptions logiques et rationnelles importées de France. C'est en vain qu'il essaie d'expliquer son vécu antillais par les signifiants français. L'échec de sa tentative de structurer par une chronologie vérifiable le discours associatif du quimboiseur qui dénomme son vécu (relation paradigmatique) en est la preuve. Mathieu habite la ville, *en bas*, dans la société aliénée par la norme française, son code d'idée correspond donc à son code d'action aussi longtemps qu'il y reste. Mais dès qu'il fréquente le quimboiseur, *en haut,* il s'embrouille: Mathieu est confronté au discours associatif, incompatible avec le discours logique et rationnel.[8] Edouard Glissant veut, par ses personnages, joindre les deux visions du monde et de l'histoire, celle de la magie et celle de la mémoire, pour en faire - dans un processus dialectique - une seule histoire antillaise.

Le personnage Mycéa correspond peut-être le plus aux conceptions d'Edouard Glissant. Bien qu'elle habite la ville, *en bas,* elle emploie le discours associatif des gens d'*en haut* ou, mieux encore, elle se tait et *vit son antillanité:* elle comprend les connotations du discours d'*en bas* et d'*en haut.* Elle *est* authentique. Edouard Glissant caractérise l'authenticité de Mycéa et son enracinement dans la terre antillaise de façon suivante:

> "Alors, dans un lent et continu mouvement qui était aussi bien un contentement qui s'arrachait d'elle, sa main ramena la petite roche attachée en appât dans la racine. [...] C'est ainsi que pour la première fois elle revient à elle-même. Transparente, pesant d'un poids inattendu sur les ombrages qui descendaient. Réelle enfin sur l'éparpillement. La toute minuscule chose qu'elle avait dessouchée restait dans sa main. Preuve qu'elle était descendue au fond du vertige et avait ramené un poids rassurant, trop connu déjà" (Glissant 1987 : 236).

Avec la petite roche, arrachée des racines de la plante, Mycéa tient en main un témoin de l'histoire antillaise. Le grand poids de la roche l'implante dans la terre antillaise. Elle vit en parfaite harmonie avec elle-même et avec son passé. Mais c'est précisément cette harmonie entre elle-même et l'histoire antillaise authentique qui lui cause des difficultés,

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[8]Le quimboiseur choisit Mathieu pour lui transmettre l'héritage traditionnel des esclaves transbordés d'Afrique. C'est alors que la vision d'un monde magique et celle d'un monde logique sont confrontées: " - Comme ce soleil et cette lune à la fois sur ta tête, dit Longoué. Tu aurais cru que c'est un seul feu un seul éclat, tu ne sais pas lequel éclaire l'autre. Si c'est la magie qui te fait comprendre le passé ou si c'est la mémoire la suite logique par-dessus le nuage qui devant toi brillent?" (Glissant 964 : 74)

car elle ne cadre pas avec la société antillaise déterminée par les normes françaises rationnelles et logiques. Elle sera donc considérée comme folle et hospitalisée.

Les personnages d'Edouard Glissant échouent dans leur recherche d'un langage spécifiquement antillais, expression d'une histoire vécue authentique. Aucun d'eux ne réussit à faire fusionner les deux versions de l'histoire, celle *d'en haut* et celle *d'en bas*. L'auteur développe pourtant de nouvelles formes de communication entre les personnages de ses romans, entre l'auteur-conteur/narrateur et le lecteur.

La construction d'un nouveau discours

Pour développer un discours antillais spécifique capable de construire une propre histoire antillaise, l'écrivain est obligé de structurer une nouvelle écriture à partir de l'oralité, c'est-à-dire à partir des signes spécifiques du créole tels que les histoires et les contes.[9] Simone Schwarz-Bart revalorise par exemple la culture orale en utilisant dans ses romans les contes de la tradition orale, bien que ces contes soient de son invention. Pour elle, les contes que les anciens racontent encore aujourd'hui à la campagne retransmettent l'héritage culturel. L'auteur en souligne l'importance, lorsqu'elle commence le roman *Ti Jean L'horizon* par l'énoncé des anciens marrons:

> "Pourtant nous ne pouvons vivre sans ce travail incessant de la langue, sans toute cette germination de contes qui sont notre Ombre et notre mystère. Et comme le léopard meurt avec ses couleurs, nous tombons mortellement avec notre Ombre, celle que tissent nos histoires et qui nous fait renaître chaque fois, avec un éclat différent ..." (Schwarz-Bart 1979: 5).

Simone Schwarz-Bart fait raconter les contes par ses personnages. L'auteur invente par exemple dans *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* l'histoire d'un chevalier qui perd le pouvoir sur son cheval. C'est Toussine qui la raconte à sa petite-fille Télumée comme s'il s'agissait d'un authentique conte antillais. Toussine explique par là le comportement d'Elie qui a maltraité et abandonné sa femme: Elie s'était laissé séduire par une autre femme qui lui impose sa volonté comme l'avait fait le cheval du conte. Le conte raconté par Toussine a la fonction d'expliquer la vie à Télumée. Toussine décrit et explique les événements actuels de la vie de Télumée

[9] "[...] pour nous la musique, le geste, la danse sont des modes de communication, tout aussi importants que l'art de la parole. C'est par cette pratique que nous sommes d'abord sortis des plantations: c'est à partir de cette oralité qu'il faut structurer l'expression esthétique de nos cultures. [...] Il s'agit pour nous de concilier enfin les valeurs des civilisations de l'écrit et les traditions longtemps inférioriséees des peuples de l'oralité" (Glissant 1981 : 462).

par les paroles des anciens, c'est-à-dire par une histoire que l'auteur fait passer pour un conte. Les signifiants du conte se réfèrent directement aux signifiés du vécu de Télumée, ce qui lui permet d'expliquer et de modifier sa vie.

Dans *Ti Jean L'horizon,* Simone Schwarz-Bart procède de la même façon. Elle crée un microcosme dans une histoire racontée où elle annonce la fin de l'aventure de son héros. Au royaume des morts, une femme raconte à Ti Jean l'histoire de l'enfant Losiko-Siko, de "celui-qui-dit-oui-à-la-mort ..." (Schwarz-Bart 1979: 204) et qui a fendu le ventre d'une gigantesque bête:

> "et par cette fente, sortaient une à une toute les nations de la terre, et puis ce fut le tour du soleil, de la lune et des étoiles qui prirent docilement place dans le ciel." (Schwarz-Bart 1979: 204 sq.).

La femme prédit dans cette histoire, qu'on lui avait racontée dans son village natal, l'avenir de Ti Jean. Le conte a ici la fonction d'encourager le héros. Le garçon du conte est méprisé par les gens auxquels il a donné la liberté. Il se transforme en pierre pour échapper à leur poursuite. Un de ses persécuteurs le lance sur l'autre rive du fleuve où il redevient homme. Les expériences du héros du conte correspondent à celles de Ti Jean en Afrique (libération, mépris, poursuite, lapidation) et annoncent sa renaissance: de l'Afrique il sera lancé sur l'autre rive de l'océan en Guadeloupe. Les signes linguistiques utilisés dans le conte ne décrivent pas le déroulement d'un événement réel, mais comprennent comme symboles signifiants les lois, les normes et les valeurs de la société antillaise. Chez Simone Schwarz-Bart, l'histoire racontée est la mémoire collective de la société antillaise,[10] comme l'avait démontré la citation au début du roman *Ti Jean L'horizon:* L'histoire antillaise cesse d'exister au moment où les gens de la société antillaise arrêtent de raconter les contes, au moment où son passé tombe dans l'oubli.

Contrairement à Simone Schwarz-Bart, Edouard Glissant ne se sert pas de contes pour faire comprendre la vie à ses personnages fictifs. Il ne crée pas de microcosme qui expliquerait le destin de ses héros. Pour lui, les contes tout comme la langue et la culture créole font partie du passé de la société de plantation qui, de nos jours, n'existe plus aux Antilles. De façon hypothétique, il les décrit comme la culture authentique de ses personnages dans un temps révolu, mais il ne peut plus s'en servir aujourd'hui en tant qu'auteur, car "le conte ne consacre pas l'accumulation culturelle et ne la dynamise pas" (Glissant 1981 : 151). Le conte témoigne du système et de la structure de la société coloniale aliénée (Glissant 1981 : 243 sq.).

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[10]Voir les réflexions sur la fonction de la culture orale dans: Tzvetan Todorov (1982): *La conquête de l'Amérique. La question de l'autre.* Paris: Seuil.

A l'inverse de Simone Schwarz-Bart, les contes n'étant plus l'expression d'une culture et d'une histoire antillaise authentique chez Edouard Glissant, l'auteur les prend pour témoins afin de démontrer que les Antillais ne se sont pas rendus maîtres de leur propre espace social. "Le conte antillais délimite un passage non-possédé: c'est l'anti-Histoire. [...] Le conte nous a donné le Nous, en exprimant de manière implicite que nous avons à le conquérir" (Glissant 1981 : 152). Le conte raconté en créole n'existe donc qu'en fonction du colonisateur français. Expression d'une société de plantation révolue,[11] il a perdu aujourd'hui sa fonction de culture authentique du peuple antillais. Le conte indique uniquement que les Antillais ne doivent pas abandonner la lutte pour une société autonome.

Dans le roman *La case du commandeur,* Edouard Glissant précise par exemple la place que la population antillaise attribue aujourd'hui aux contes: "Plus personne ne croyait aux contes et à peine en quelques endroits chantait-on à la veillée" (Glissant 1981a : 201). Lorsque Ozonzo raconte à Cinna Chimène les événements historiques du transbordement de l'Africain aux Caraïbes, il emploie, d'une certaine manière, la forme du conte: il combine différentes images que Cinna Chimène ne comprend pourtant pas. Aussi Edouard Glissant se demande-t-il: "L'écoutant devinait-elle ce qui sous cette histoire se dessinait en fait d'histoire?" (Glissant 1981a : 68). Au niveau fictif du roman, l'histoire racontée n'explique pas la vie à l'héroïne, elle pose au contraire des énigmes. Les contes d'Ozonzo ne donnent pas de réponse satisfaisante à ses questions: "Grave, Ozonzo lui parlait que la parole ne peut pas changer, tout comme la connaissance ne peut pas vaciller [...]. Ils menaient leur combat de mots" (Glissant 1981a : 8). Le lecteur comprend cependant tout de suite qu'il s'agit d'une reconstruction du passé de la société antillaise et qu'Ozonzo transmet par le conte le savoir collectif de sa communauté. Le conte qui chez Simone Schwarz-Bart fonctionnait au niveau de la réalité fictive (niveau syntagmatique), devient chez Edouard Glissant un moyen d'informer le lecteur sur les événements historiques du vécu antillais (niveau paradigmatique).

Les "contes" d'Edouard Glissant seront appelés par la suite "images" pour les distinguer des contes dans les romans de Simone Schwarz-Bart. Ils ont la fonction de symboles signifiants. Le sens des "images" n'a souvent pas de rapport visible avec un référent de la fiction, comme dans les contes de Simone Schwarz-Bart. L'ensemble des "images" du texte comprend - en cas idéal - le savoir collectif du vécu antillais. Par ses "images", l'auteur rétablit la relation paradigmatique, tandis que les contes, inventés

[11] "Le créole fut dans les îles la langue du système des plantations, par quoi se faisait la culture de la canne à sucre. Le système a disparu, mais à la Martinique il n'a pas été remplacé par un autre mode de production" (Glissant 1981 : 241).

par Simone Schwarz-Bart, signifient au niveau syntagmatique. Edouard Glissant crée par exemple dans son conte du poisson-chambre "l'image" d'un négrier qui transporte les Africains aux Caraïbes. Un lecteur (relation paradigmatique) qui connaît l'histoire antillaise reconnait la connotation de "l'image", le personnage fictif Cinna Chimène par contre (relation syntagmatique) ne peut pas l'insérer dans sa vision du monde. Les expériences de l'auteur et du lecteur dans le vécu antillais se ressemblent dans la mesure où le fait historique des négriers leur est connu. L'auteur illustre et explique par son "image" du *poisson-chambre* ce fait historique. "L'image" ne se laisse pourtant pas inscrire logiquement au niveau syntagmatique de la réalité fictive du roman.

Chez Edouard Glissant, les "images" en forme de conte se réfèrent à l'histoire réelle de la société antillaise et non pas au destin des personnages fictifs. Bien qu'elles soient racontées par les personnages des romans, elles s'adressent directement au lecteur qui peut les expliquer à partir de son propre vécu. Le message de l'image n'est pas toujours expliqué, l'auteur se contente de thématiser son existence. Edouard Glissant décrit par exemple comment l'esclave Anatolie Celat[12] raconte aux femmes de l'habitation des pans de l'histoire lorsqu'il leur fait l'amour. Les femmes racontent ensuite ces pans de l'histoire au béké qui, de son tour, les raconte à sa femme. Sa femme les écrit dans l'ordre raconté par les femmes noires. La "chronologie" de l'histoire est donc donnée par les récits successifs des femmes possédées et non pas par le déroulement chronologique réel des faits racontés. Edouard Glissant ne dit rien sur le contenu des contes; le lecteur pourra donc l'imaginer en fonction des expériences de son propre vécu. La femme béké remplace par son écriture l'histoire écrite chronologique et rationnelle des Français. Elle fait ainsi naître, de ces pans dissolus de la tradition orale, une histoire. L'auteur dessine "l'image" des Antillais sautant d'un pan ou d'une roche de l'histoire à l'autre afin d'avancer dans leur vie.

> "Nous sautons de roche en roche dans ce temps! [...] *La farine de la France saupoudrait nos rêves. Nous ne faisions marcher qu'une dent, la dent à pain.* Nous sautons nous ravageons la roche nous sommes les casseurs de roches du temps" (Glissant 1981a : 138 sq.).

Entre les roches ou les pans de l'histoire, il y a des trous qui font peur aux Antillais.

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[12] "[...] le premier de notre sorte à gagner, si c'est gagner, un nom de famille [...]. Anatolie Celat était notre goût et notre toucher, nous le jetions au-devant de nous pour nous assurer que nous existions, que nous voulions quelque chose et que nous étions en mesure de l'obtenir" (Glissant 1981a : 109.)

> "C'était là une de nos manières de courir au bout de la mémoire [...] jusqu'à ce trou d'où nous nous écartons en sautant [...]. Tellement nous avons peur de ce trou du temps passé. Tellement nous frissonnons de nous y voir" (Glissant 1981a : 152).

Les Antillais craignent la confrontation avec leur passé inconnu, ils craignent ce *trou du passé,* qui jusqu'ici était caché par la version française de l'histoire écrite.

Dans son roman *Mahagony,* Edouard Glissant démontre comment les conteurs antillais procèdent et se servent de leur pratique. Il fait raconter au chroniqueur une histoire qui lui fut racontée: ici, il s'agit d'un rêve. Il se rapproche par là de Simone Schwarz-Bart qui fait raconter à Télumée l'histoire de sa famille qui lui fut elle-même racontée. Pour Edouard Glissant ce n'est cependant pas le contenu de l'histoire qui est important, c'est le processus de changement: l'histoire est modifiée soit par le chroniqueur ou par les commentaires, ou bien encore par des événements actuels.

> "Gani confère son rêve à Tani qui le rapporte à Eudoxie qui le conte à la veillée. Le rêve est embelli de place en place, d'âge en âge. [...] Le rêve est-il de Gani ou, tout autant, de la procession de conteurs assurés qui se relayèrent pour le sauver de l'oublie? [...] Mon ami le chroniqueur avait voulu descendre en spirale, le plus à fond possible, dans le tohu-bohu du temps que nous vivons" (Glissant 1981a : 213 sq.).

Le rêve raconté le soir en public devient une partie de la mémoire collective de la société antillaise. Le chroniqueur en tant qu'*homme de parole* pénètre jusqu'au fond de l'histoire par des déviations en spirale et non pas par la logique ou la raison, et en cela il ressemble à l'auteur.

Conclusion

Il incombe à l'auteur antillais de transformer le savoir collectif oral en écriture pour que l'*histoire subie* puisse devenir cette *histoire vécue.* Mais il ne peut pas - comme le conteur ou le chroniqueur qui lui sert de source - supposer que le système référentiel du chroniqueur et du lecteur soit le même.

> "La ressource de l'homme d'écriture sera de consentir sans nuance à l'intention souvent prêchée par l'homme de parole; de porter cette intention à l'un de ses extrêmes: ajoutant, comme un luxe de précision ou de clarté, le glossaire que voici (la chose écrite a besoin de glossaire, pour ce qu'elle manque en écho ou en vent), au texte dont il a fait un si peu décisif héritage" (Glissant 1987 : 230).

Aussi, les situations et les termes connus de tous les auditeurs dans la situation de l'histoire racontée devront-ils être fixés par écrit. Une telle description ne pourra plus être réalisée par un discours associatif comme celui du quimboiseur et de Mycéa, mais par un discours logique et rationnel pour qu'elle soit compréhensible d'un point de vue étranger. Edouard Glissant emploie, par conséquent, dans ses textes poétiques à la fois un discours logique et rationnel pour décrire la société et la culture créole, et un discours associatif pour donner la parole à cette société.

> "[...] je pencherais plutôt vers une oralité de l'écrit. Leur rythme est celui du conte. Leur parole écrit avec l'humeur des mots qu'on chante. Et puis, il y a tout ce chaos de notre rapport au temps, à l'histoire défaite, qu'il faut fixer, recomposer [...] Pour moi, depuis longtemps je m'efforce à conquérir une durée qui se dérobe, à vivre un paysage qui se multiplie, à chanter une histoire qui n'est nulle part donnée" (Glissant 1981 : 451).

Simone Schwarz-Bart et Edouard Glissant transposent la culture créole orale en un discours de langue française. Tandis que chez Simone Schwarz-Bart, les contes racontés dans la fiction ont une fonction semblable à celle qu'ils remplissent dans le vécu antillais, Edouard Glissant les défait *(désacralisation)* pour les refaire en de nouvelles "images" *(sacralisation)*. Ils perdent ainsi leur fonction d'expliquer la réalité fictive. Ce démontage et ce remontage se manifestent à la fois au niveau thématique, comme l'a prouvé l'histoire racontée par Anatolie Celat, et au niveau syntactique par le discours associatif du quimboiseur, de Mycéa et d'autres personnages fictifs. Les deux auteurs tentent d'établir le rapport entre le texte et le vécu antillais, c'est-à-dire entre les signifiants et les signifiés, par la création d'un autre langage tout en se servant des signes de la langue française. Ils remplacent le savoir collectif importé de France (l'ensemble des signifiants) par une dénomination et désignation authentique du vécu antillais afin de remédier à l'aliénation mentale et sociale dans le vécu.

Dans la réalité fictive d'Edouard Glissant, l'informateur Mathieu et l'auteur deviennent identiques, ils poursuivent le même but.[13] Après un long séjour à l'étranger, Mathieu revient aux Antilles et essaie de reconstituer par écrit l'histoire antillaise authentique. Il a abandonné son projet d'écrire une histoire chronologique pour mettre en relation les pans des histoires racontées.

> "La raideur à élucider l'histoire cède au plaisir des histoires. L'écriture fragile, si à la fois elle s'affermit, ne fait partout

[13] "Qu'à la fin ni l'informateur ni l'auteur n'eussent pu se reconnaître l'un à part de l'autre; et que le lecteur attentif ne saurait non plus, du moins sans vertige, le distinguer" (Glissant 1987 : 228 sq.).

> qu'esquisser l'épure. Il faut mériter - deviner à force - ce qui en surgit" (Glissant 1987 : 229).

Edouard Glissant procède de la même façon que son personnage fictif. Ses "images" établissent une relation entre la réalité fictive des personnages et le vécu du lecteur qui peut ainsi refaire l'histoire antillaise. Cette nouvelle histoire écrite aura donc un rapport direct avec le vécu antillais, même s'il n'y a aucune relation logique et rationnelle entre les "images" dissolues au niveau de l'écriture.

Bien qu'il utilise les signes de la langue française, ce nouveau discours ne recourt plus à un système référentiel extérieur à son propre espace géographique et à son propre temps historique. Les signes du système de la langue française ont été vidés de leur sens initial; ils ont acquis une nouvelle signification, empreinte de la vision du monde créole.[14] Ce ne sont plus les *langues* des anciens colonisateurs, français, anglais, espagnol etc. qui caractérisent le nouveau discours antillais, mais le *langage* commun aux peuples de la Caraïbe né de la créolité (Bernabé, Jean et al. 1989: 30 sq.). Il reflète le sort commun de toutes les îles de la Caraïbe: la rupture historique, l'angoisse et l'oppression de l'esclavage, la pratique du détour etc. Il traduit l'héritage fragmenté des Caraïbes, des Africains, des Européens et des Indiens. Aussi ce nouveau discours, manifestation d'une nouvelle conception de l'histoire antillaise, est-il "le métissage [...] des styles, des langages, des cultures" (Glissant 1990 : 92). De même que les Antillais résultent du métissage de plusieurs races qu'il n'est plus possible de dissocier, ce discours puise sa force à la fois dans la diversité des cultures aux Caraïbes (niveau syntagmatique) et dans l'unicité des expériences historiques (niveau paradigmatique).

Edouard Glissant ne décrit plus l'histoire antillaise de l'extérieur, ce qui équivalait à un détour de la réalité vécue, il s'identifie au personnage fictif de l'informateur:

> "Pour moi cependant, j'ai voulu fixer à l'aide de ces signes dont la pertinence n'est pas sûre ce que j'eusse pu aussi bien déclamer aux vents austères et jalous. [...] Véritablement je m'appelle Mathieu Béluse. Selon la loi du conte, je vivrai encore longtemps" (Glissant 1987 : 252).

L'identité entre l'informateur et l'auteur aboutit à l'identité des signifiants et des signifiés: Edouard Glissant est arrivé à son but – du moins en théorie: il désigne et explique le vécu antillais par un discours indépendant de tout autre discours occidental "universaliste". Il a donc développé dans ses textes poétiques[15] un discours antillais qui n'est plus

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[14]Voir Roland Barthes (1957): *Mythologies*. Paris: Seuil.

[15]Dans les textes scientifiques du *Discours antillais* (1981) et de *Poétique de la Relation* (1990) Glissant a recours aux philosophes, sociologues et scientifiques

une réaction positive ou négative envers le discours de la Métropole, mais qui décrit la réalité vécue des Antillais, c'est-à-dire leur propre histoire. Il a réussi à mettre en relation les pans des histoires racontées et vécues par les Antillais afin que l'*histoire* jusqu'alors subie soit transformée en *histoire vécue.*

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du monde entier. En tant qu'Antillais, il entre en relation avec les hommes du reste du monde.

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La difficile inscription de/dans l'*(H)h*istoire: le corpus[1] schwarz-bartien

Kathleen Gyssels (Anvers)

> C'est contre cette double prétention d'une Histoire avec un grand H et d'une littérature sacralisée dans l'absolu du signe écrit que se sont aussi battus [...] les peuples qui jusqu'ici cachaient la face cachée de la terre.
> Edouard Glissant, *Le Discours antillais*

> Le monde était rond et nous les épices dedans: le temps faisait tournoyer nos souvenirs comme des étoiles; igname cassave arachide jarousse jachère et puis c'étaient ignames à nouveau.
> Edward Kamau Brathwaite, *Le Détonateur de visibilité*

Depuis des siècles, l'Occident (et sa hégémonie culturelle) - dont Hegel fut un des meilleurs porte-parole, crut justifié de définir l'Autre comme celui qui ne vit pas ici mais là-bas, qui ne participa pas au cours de l'Histoire mais vivait dans un monde qui ignorerait le sens du temps (Barthold 1981: 5). Un premier enjeu du roman postcolonial consiste dès lors à subvertir au sein de la narration ces deux catégories incontournables que sont l'espace et le temps, de leur assigner un sens nouveau. Au lieu de l'unicité spatiale propre au discours dominant du Centre, signe de légitimité territoriale et d'harmonie, le roman de la diaspora noire thématise la pluralité spatiale. S'inscrivant en faux contre leurs anciens oppresseurs qui mettaient en carte les lieux conquis, effaçant les toponymes indigènes, les auteurs caribéens situent leurs romans dans un lieu fictif qui, bien qu'insulaire et ressemblant trait par trait à une île caribéenne, n'existe pas. Pensons à "L'Ile des Chevaliers" dans *Tar Baby* de Toni Morrison, à Casaquemada dans *Retour à Casaquemada* de Neil Bissoondath, ou encore à Bournehills dans *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* de Paule Marshall. De plus, les auteurs peuplent ces îles de déracinés, d'errants à la recherche de leur "place exacte", leitmotiv du bestseller schwarz-bartien (TM, 125). La pluralité spatiale traduit la

[1] *La Mulâtresse Solitude* d'André Schwarz-Bart (Seuil, 1972; sigle LMS); *Un plat de porc aux bananes vertes* de Simone et André (Seuil, 1967; sigle PDP); *Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle* (Seuil, 1972, Coll. Points; sigle TM) et *Ti Jean L'horizon* de Simone (Seuil, 1979, Coll. Points; sigle TJ).

difficulté à se (ré-)approprier l'île v(i)olée, souillée par l'esclavage et le colonialisme. Pluralité et fictionalité spatiales sont une réponse ingénieuse à la première dépossession de l'Antillais: celle de son sol natal, du continent de ses ancêtres. A cela s'ajoute la dépossession du temps, de la liberté de gérer celui-ci soi-même, de l'employer comme on veut. "Fils de ceux qui survécurent" selon l'expression de Glissant, l'auteur antillais relate une quête identitaire qui pallie cette double privation. La quête prend dès lors la forme d'une aventure socio-géographique, doublée d'une remontée du temps. Quant à l'examen du passé, le narrateur fera appel à des moyens non-réalistes et irrationnels, car il vit la spatialité comme spirituelle. Au lieu physique se superposera le lieu du resouvenir, de la remémoration, de la répétition (dans *Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle,* le "sous-bois" est un haut lieu mythique, site où Télumée sent la présence des marrons).

Quant au temps (romanesque), le narrateur postcolonial se libère de ses contraintes. Les épisodes ne sont pas chronologiques et ne s'ancrent pas dans le temps historique. Les séquences narratives constituent plutôt des échappées mythiques et oniriques. Des paraphrases telles que, "à cette époque, la forêt entrait en déclin" (TJ, 67), ou "l'année du grand tremblement de terre", "l'année du cyclone" (Glissant 1981: 131) doivent suffire au lecteur avide d'indications temporelles. Souvent, il se produit un télescopage du temps: passé, présent, futur se mélangent pour exprimer un vécu du temps problématique. Glissant en témoigne: "Notre quête de la dimension temporelle ne sera donc ni harmonieuse, ni linéaire. Elle cheminera dans une polyphonie de chocs dramatiques, au niveau du conscient comme de l'inconscient, entre des données, des 'temps' disparates, discontinus, dont le lié n'est pas évident. L'harmonie majestueuse ne prévaut pas ici, mais [...] la recherche inquiète et souvent chaotique" (Glissant, 1981:199). La délinéation du récit, le cadre atemporel du récit, l'imprécision géographique, voilà autant d'éléments qui sont symptomatiques du mal-être antillais. L'incipit de *Ti Jean L'horizon* souligne d'emblée ce regard négatif jeté sur l'insularité et l'histoire guadeloupéenne: "l'île où se déroule cette histoire n'est pas très connue. Elle flotte dans le golfe du Mexique, à la dérive". Et le narrateur de continuer: "C'est une lèche de terre sans importance et son histoire a été jugée une fois pour toutes insignifiante par les spécialistes" (TJ, 9-10). Les habitants eux-mêmes minimalisent chaque "événement" susceptible d'entrer dans les annales de l'Histoire. Ainsi, la protagoniste d'*Un plat de porc aux bananes vertes* s'interroge p.ex. au début de son Cahier si ce qu'elle vit mérite vraiment le terme "événement", étant donné que les hospices et les léproseries sont des lieux où l'individu, exclu de l'Histoire puisqu'il ne fonctionne plus dans la société, "pourrit sur pied" (PDP, 12). En même temps, l'auteur antillais refuse le vécu du temps propre au Béké (le Blanc créole), parce

qu'entièrement axé sur le profit maximal et le rendement optimal. S'il veut reconquérir une plénitude identitaire, l'Antillais décolonisé doit se construire un temps qui combine l'axe linéaire (propre à l'Europe impérialiste et dominante) et l'axe cyclique, celui du "temps rond" (Brathwaite 1986:33), propre à l'Afrique traditionnelle.

Si tous les romans schwarz-bartiens entendent révéler l'*h*istoire guadeloupéenne à travers des quêtes identitaires, il n'est pas indifférent qu'André Schwarz-Bart opte pour le roman historique, alors que son épouse s'écarte délibérément de ce genre littéraire. Elle "féminise" l'*h*istoire (avec minuscule, en contrepied avec l'Histoire coloniale, officielle). Je distinguerai d'abord une "manipulation" plus proprement masculine du passé antillais en examinant le roman *La Mulâtresse Solitude*. Ensuite, il me semble licite de définir à partir de *Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle* et d'*Un plat de porc aux bananes vertes* une version et une vision plus proprement féminines de l'*h*istoire, lesquelles trouvent par ailleurs leur confirmation dans d'autres romans féminins de la diaspora noire.

La Mulâtresse Solitude: Chronique de la Guadeloupe à la fin du XVIII^{e} siècle

A part quelques exceptions (les romans d'Alejo Carpentier dont on peut se demander s'il doit être considéré comme écrivain caribéen ou européen), le roman historique reste un genre caribéen pratiqué parce que peu praticable aux Antilles. Face au *Bildungsroman* et à l'autobiographie, il ne connaît qu'un succès mitigé (pensons aux romans de Roland Brival et de Vincent Placoly), et cela pour deux raisons. Primo, il s'agit d'un genre occidental par excellence, dont les chefs-d'œuvre (*Les Trois Mousquetaires* de Alexandre Dumas père, 1844; *Notre-Dame de Paris* de Victor Hugo, 1831 – et son début négrophile *Bug-Jargal,* 1820) immortalisent les épisodes capitaux de l'Histoire de France et rendent gloire à la patrie. Généralement, le roman historique étaie et justifie une histoire de domination, une entreprise de conquête. Tel reste sa raison d'être idéologique, jusque dans ses dérivés colonialistes. Ainsi, le roman colonial sert à légitimer la soi-disant entreprise coloniale et voulait sensibiliser, par une propagande impérialiste, d'éventuels lecteurs à la grande mission civilisatrice de la France dans des contrées lointaines et sauvages. Pour l'auteur postcolonial, il est impossible de suivre ce scénario "ascensionnel", de copier le héros historique classique: personnage hors-du-commun qui, assoiffé de victoire et aguerri par les défaites, change le cours des événements. Secundo, le roman historique recourt à l'historiographie, science occidentale qui, de ce fait, n'est pas toujours exempte d'eurocentrisme simplifiant. A première vue, *La Mulâtresse Solitude* se plie aux exigences du genre. Or,

dans le même temps, le roman les transgresse. Ainsi, la mulâtresse Solitude est bel et bien un personnage historique, mais son itinéraire tragique en infirme sa définition. L'auteur a voulu montrer que cette sang-mêlé ne comprend pas du tout l'Histoire qui se joue autour d'elle. Brusquement affranchie par le décret du 16 Pluviôse An II (1794), elle erre à travers une Guadeloupe chaotique, où la vie n'est nullement meilleure pour les Noirs émancipés. Quand 8 ans plus tard, Napoléon donne ordre à Leclerc de rétablir l'esclavage, elle se joint à une bande de marrons dirigés par Louis Delgrès. Selon la légende, elle va pourtant être une vaillante "guerrière", mais "sans le vouloir, sans même le savoir dit-on, elle conduisit le groupe désemparé et qui s'amenuisait de jour en jour." (LMS, 110) Homme de couleur qui n'est pas victime de myopie politique, Delgrès s'oppose farouchement à l'asservissement et se retire avec 300 insurgés à l'Habitation Danglemont à Matouba. Conscients qu'ils sont perdus, il fait dynamiter leur ultime lieu de refuge. Solitude, enceinte, survit et est conduite à la fourche patibulaire après avoir enfanté pour le profit d'un nouveau maître. Solitude est une des innombrables victimes des répercussions de la Révolution française aux "îles à sucre". Prise au dépourvu par les vicissitudes de l'Histoire, inconsciente quant aux mécanismes d'oppression qui malmènent la masse servile, elle collabore avec lassitude et participe aux combats contre les troupes françaises dans un état second, abattue et mélancolique. Si elle combat des soldats mieux armés qu'elle, c'est par envie d'en finir avec sa vie misérable: la mort serait un soulagement et non la pire chose qui puisse lui arriver. Défaitisme, "mentalité d'esclave", amnésie semblent des maux chroniques dont souffrent les Noirs aliénés, empêchant toute chronique glorieuse.

Dès l'incipit, Schwarz-Bart ne respecte pas moins l'importance capitale de la date, élément qui authentifie le récit. Or tout de suite, il la juxtapose à la formule liminaire du conte, si bien que l'effet de réel est quasi nul: "Il était une fois, sur une planète étrange, une petite négresse nommée Bayangumay. Elle était apparue sur terre vers 1750, [...]." La date fait entaille dans le récit: elle fait ressortir l'écart entre une société à tradition orale où le conte est un mode de [re]transmission de l'histoire, et une société à forte dominance scripturale, laquelle impose sa supériorité par l'archivage systématique des faits historiques. La date exclut le conte, impossible étant donné la nature dramatique de la rencontre entre les Blancs et les Noirs. La date de naissance de Bayangumay, coïncidant avec celle de l'arrivée des conquérants, constitue en quelque sorte l'entrée brusque et fatale dans l'Histoire. En effet, jusqu'à l'arrivée des "marchands d'hommes", ceux-ci vivaient dans un isolement harmonieux et tranquille. Le roman d'André Schwarz-Bart, hasardeux à classer sous le roman historique

(est-ce une raison pour expliquer qu'il reste méconnu?),[2] s'affilie au *Siècle des lumières* (1954) et au *Royaume de ce monde* (1949). A l'instar de Carpentier, André Schwarz-Bart mélange le conte, la légende et l'Histoire. Schwarz-Bart déverrouille les portes de l'Histoire coloniale en livrant la version et la vision du vaincu, c.-à-d. du colonisé. Autodidacte érudit, il lui importe de ne pas prendre trop de liberté avec le réel, aussi maigre soit le support historique de son personnage. Il veut reconstituer le passé antillais d'une "façon compatible avec la vérité historique, et en accord avec les lois de la vérité romanesque" (Kanters 1967: 8). D'où des références assez nombreuses, quoique judicieusement choisies, aux sources historiques. Ce qui prédomine est le souci documentaire, la manipulation prudente et méticuleuse de l'Histoire: la plupart des personnages ayant existé, qu'ils soient principaux (Victor Hugues chez Carpentier, Solitude chez Schwarz-Bart) ou secondaires (Lenormand de Mézy chez Carpentier, Louis Delgrès et Rochambeau chez Schwarz-Bart), leurs exploits sont expliqués par le contexte bien spécifique de la société de plantation antillaise. Avant tout, ces personnages historiques compensent l'anonymat qui entoure la plupart des personnages noirs. Quant à ceux-ci, les informations se réduisent en effet souvent à très peu de choses, exception faite du roi Christophe, de Mackandal, Boukman (roman de Brival: *La Montagne d'Ebène*), et Toussaint Louverture. Tantôt le romancier recourt à sa propre imagination pour mettre son personnage noir "imaginé" au diapason du contexte socio-historique, soit il reste archifidèle aux rares renseignements disponibles. Ainsi, André Schwarz-Bart n'hésite pas à reprendre littéralement quelques passages de l'historien le plus important pour la Guadeloupe, Henri Bangou. Celui-ci consacre quelques lignes au sort impitoyable que subirent les malheureux qui survécurent le massacre de Matouba. Rebelle au rétablissement de l'esclavage, "le capitaine Dauphin, retrouvé parmi les morts, horriblement mutilé mais vivant, fut pendu sur le cours Nolivos et son corps exposé sur la potence du morne Constantin", passage que nous retrouvons texto à la page 132 de *La Mulâtresse Solitude*. De même, les derniers mots de Solitude "Fontaine, je ne boirai de ton eau..." (LMS,

[2] Aucun article ne lui est consacré dans le colloque "La période révolutionnaire aux Antilles dans la littérature française (1750-1850) et dans les littératures caribéennes francophone, anglophone et hispanophone", actes publiés par R. Toumson (1986). Danielle Aubin l'ignore dans son article "Approche du roman historique antillais" (1988) et Paschal Kyoore se limite à Glissant, Sainville et Brival dans sa thèse intitulée *The Francophone and Caribbean Historical Novel and the Quest for Cultural Identity* (1991). Ecrivain antillais d'adoption, André Schwarz-Bart n'est tout simplement pas compté parmi les auteurs caribéens. Arnold Rampersad a résumé tous les griefs à l'encontre de ce livre dans son introduction à la traduction anglaise: *A Woman Named Solitude* (San Francisco: DS Elliot, 1985.)

136) se trouvent chez un autre historien, notamment chez Lacour dans *La Guadeloupe dans l'histoire* (1979[2]), ouvrage qu'il prit le soin d'ajouter à sa bibliographie sur les Diola et sur la Guadeloupe aux XVIII[e] et XIX[e] siècles.

A part ces sources historiographiques, l'auteur reconstitue l'histoire amputée à l'aide de contes et de légendes, créant ainsi un tableau inouï sur l'esclavage antillais à la fin de l'Ancien Régime. Deux tendances contradictoires s'y équilibrent donc, constante observée chez les auteurs latino-américains (Gabriel García Márquez, Octavio Paz). Il y a les emprunts à l'*H*istoire écrite, à l'historiographie traditionnelle d'une part, et à la mémoire du peuple, enfouie dans les légendes et les contes, de l'autre. L'imaginaire et l'inconscient collectifs, sédimentés dans les mythes et les croyances populaires, constituent une composante importante dans une peinture du passé qui se veut fidèle et qui tend à réconcilier les Antillais avec leur passé refoulé. Ce jeu antonymique entre Histoire et mémoire trouve à plusieurs reprises son expression dans le roman: "Selon une tradition orale, encore vivante sous la Côte-sous-le-Vent, du côté des pitons des Deshaies, c'est vers l'âge de douze ans que la petite fille de Bayangumay tourna en zombi-cornes." (LMS, 74)

Après avoir puisé dans l'oraliture, et livré l'information qu'il tient d'ouï-dire, le narrateur continue par une donnée rigoureusement exacte puisque basée sur les actes de vente d'esclaves: "On sait que l'enfant fut vendue et livrée le 8 février 1784 en la bonne ville de Basse-Terre de Guadeloupe." (LMS, 74)

Il devient clair que le romancier "métisse" les versions française et antillaise, qu'il écrit l'*H*istoire coloniale à rebrousse-poil en produisant une refonte originale de la tradition orale et de l'historiographie coloniale, comme le conclut Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink (Lüsebrink 1988: 378) pour d'autres auteurs "historisants" de la Caraïbe. Si André Schwarz-Bart affirme son désir d'"aborder [l'histoire du monde noir] par toutes les techniques occidentales du roman" (Kanters 1967: 8), Simone Schwarz-Bart s'émancipe résolument de cette servitude, ainsi que le font d'autres Glissant *(Quatrième siècle)* et Maximin *(Isolé Soleil)*.

Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle, Un plat de porc aux bananes vertes: "histoires d'outre-mères"

L'Occident a marginalisé la femme, l'*H*istoire l'a oubliée. Dès lors, le premier mobile d'écriture pour Simone et ses sœurs africaines-américaines (Toni Morrison, Alice Walker) et caribéennes (Merle Collins, Paule Marshall) est de s'insurger contre *l'invisibilité historique de la femme.* Reléguées aux coulisses, privées du droit de s'exprimer, *Gestalt* aux con-

tours vagues dans les premiers écrits noirs, les femmes sont aujourd'hui légions à répliquer au silence mystifiant. Elles rendent justice à ces victimes muettes en "rectifiant la version mâle de l'Histoire" (Zimra 1986: 227-57) car, en dépit des apparences, "ce sont les femmes qui ont tout sauvé, préservé, y compris l'âme des hommes", juge Simone Schwarz-Bart (interview 1990 *Ex Libris).*

Devant cette parole jugulée, la femme écrivain est préoccupée par le besoin de rattraper des mémoires et des paroles féminines qui n'ont pas retenu l'attention des hommes. D'où une première caractéristique qui, sans qu'elle soit cependant exclusivement féminine, fonde une approche nouvelle de l'*h*istoire: celle-ci devient *bio-géographique* (Holloway 1992). La chronique est supplantée par une histoire familiale, plus particulièrement matrilinéaire. Saga de l'esclavage jusqu'au XX^{e}, le "reportage" de Télumée s'avère un espace matriciel, l'histoire s'y confondant avec celle d'une lignée de "négresses". La triade féminine reflète l'évolution (ou l'involution) de rôles féminins historiquement et culturellement déterminés. Loin de se contenter de correspondre aux stéréotypes de la négresse-mère (la *Mammi* ou la Doudou selon que l'on se situe en Amérique noire ou aux Antilles), de la négresse-sorcière *(obeah/conjure woman* ou la séancière), ou de la mulâtresse-nymphomane *(the tragic mulatto)* ou sa sœur-négresse lascive, les Antillaises cherchent à extirper ses modèles forgés par un passé d'exploitation, par une histoire de colonisation.

Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle, ainsi qu'*Un plat de porc aux bananes vertes* mettent en relief ce que cela signifiait d'être femme et de surcroît noire, sous l'esclavage (Minerve, Man Louise) et la colonisation (Reine Sans Nom et Télumée), mais également aujourd'hui, à l'heure où les Antilles françaises sont départementalisées (Télumée, Mariotte). Il me manque l'espace et le temps pour énumérer tous les romans féminins qui correspondent à cette matrice narrative: *Praisesong for the Widow* (traduit en français comme *Racines Noires*) (Marshall 1983), *Crick Crack Monkey* (Hodge 1970), etc...Partout, la grand-mère est un pont entre le passé et le présent; personnage pivotal, l'aïeule assure la sauvegarde des *ancient properties* et préserve la mémoire collective (Morrison 1983: 339-345). Soit elle est la matriarche qui prône la résistance larvée; soit elle représente la Loi et, comme Man Louise dans *Un plat de porc,* elle inculque alors la soumission au Blanc et l'oubli du passé ancestral dans la triste illusion de devenir, l'égale du Béké.

Ensuite, le destin individuel érigé en témoignage sur et de l'histoire est *transindividuel.* Jamais la protagoniste féminine n'est isolée d'une confrérie féminine. L'héroïne incarne l'histoire d'une "sororité", car à travers ses mésaventures et humiliations personnelles ressurgit le passé collectif, l'histoire d'un village. Il en suit que la protagoniste se confond avec l'espace du voisinage: Reine Sans Nom est la "négresse vaillante" de Fond-

Zombi, celle qui inspire courage aux habitants par sa combativité exemplaire. De même, sa petite-fille Télumée s'identifie aux mornes La Folie et l'Abandonnée: elle est "l'arbre Résolu sur lequel s'appuie tout le voisinage"; la maman "Miracle". Il en va de même dans d'autres romans féminins caribéens, voire africains-américains; pensons à *Beloved* (Morrison 1987) où Sula se confond avec "The Bottom"; à *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* (Marshall 1976) où Merle Kimbona s'ancre dans Bournehills dont elle défend avec acharnement la population pauvre et les traditions ancestrales. Deux épisodes capitaux dans *Pluie et Vent* illustrent la jonction de l'individuel et du collectif. Lorsque la petite Télumée apprend par un conte métaphorique le passé esclavagiste de son île[3], elle comprend du coup que le comportement bizarre, l'identité "dichotomisée" (Campbell 1987) sont imputables à l'esclavage. Pour la première fois de sa vie, elle partage ce "déchirement constant", cette "tristesse congénitale" qui lui demeuraient jusque-là un mystère. Etape importante sur le chemin de la vie adulte, cette prise de conscience la conduit à se sentir membre d'une communauté qui refoule son histoire honteuse, qui camoufle le malaise derrière un masque de gaieté feinte: "Pour la première fois de ma vie, je sentais que l'esclavage n'était pas un pays étranger, une région lointaine d'où venaient certaines personnes très anciennes [...] Tout cela s'était déroulé ici même, dans nos mornes et nos vallons [...] Et je songeais aux rires de certains hommes, de certaines femmes, leurs petites quintes de toux résonnaient en moi, cependant qu'une musique déchirante s'élevait dans ma poitrine." (TM, 62)

La révélation du passé, aussi douloureuse soit-elle, provoque donc une prise de conscience raciale et historique. Elle permet d'adhérer à une communauté taraudée par son passé au point d'être en porte-à-faux avec son présent. Le deuxième exemple d'intersection entre l'histoire individuelle et collective, je l'emprunte au chapitre final. Pressentant sa propre mort, Télumée réfléchit sur les "méandres" qu'a pris sa barque et sur la signification de la souffrance. Elle voit dans une espèce d'illumination hallucinatoire d'où vient toute cette "déveine" qui n'en finit pas d'opprimer son peuple. Elle nous évoque le marché d'esclaves, et dit vouloir racheter tous par sa parole rédemptrice: "J'allume ma lanterne de clair de lune et je regarde à travers les ténèbres du passé, le marché, le marché où ils se tiennent, et je soulève la lanterne pour chercher le visage

[3]La protagoniste de *Racines noires (op.cit.)* apprend de la bouche de sa grand-tante le mythe des Ibos se promenant sur l'eau pour regagner l'Afrique. Dans *La Chanson de Salomon* (Morrison, 1977), Laitier entend de Pilate, la tante sans nombril, que certains Africains se mettaient à voler pour fuir les plantations et rentrer dans la terre natale. Enfin, l'histoire du père Abel poursuivi par Man Cia, la "négresse volante" mène directement à l'examination du passé servile pour la petite Télumée.

de mon ancêtre, et tous les visages sont les mêmes et tous les miens, et je continue à chercher et je tourne autour d'eux jusqu'à ce qu'ils soient tous achetés, saignants, écartelés, seuls." (TM, 244)

Rappeler par la parole ces morts sans sépulture est une manière de leur rendre un dernier hommage, de garantir leur service funéraire, fût-ce sous forme d'un récit. Stèle funéraire, le récit supplante l'artefact d'histoire. Le récit de Télumée a valeur d'une veillée, soirée de narration par excellence pendant laquelle on se recueille sur ceux qui l'ont précédée dans une mort beaucoup plus violente et injuste que la sienne. Décrivant ce qui ne doit jamais être oublié, Télumée désigne aussi du doigt celui qui est coupable de la chute du Noir. Elle ose donc intenter le procès de l'Histoire dans un passage d'autant plus touchant qu'il fait écho au sophisme de Montesquieu (1745, chap. XV): "Je pense à ce qu'il en est de l'injustice sur la terre, et de nous autres en train de souffrir, de mourir silencieusement de l'esclavage après qu'il soit fini, oublié. J'essaye, j'essaye toutes les nuits, et je n'arrive pas à comprendre comment cela a pu continuer, comment cela peut durer encore, dans mon âme tourmentée, indécise, en lambeaux et qui sera notre dernière prison. Parfois mon cœur se fêle et *je me demande si nous sommes des hommes, parce que, si nous étions des hommes, on ne nous aurait pas traités ainsi, peut-être.*" (TM, 244) (C'est moi qui souligne.)

Comme l'annoncent les modes de commémoration, les moyens de remémoration évoqués ci-dessus, la rencontre avec l'histoire et sa réécriture seront *psycho-historiques.* Le souvenir, le rêve, la mémoire involontaire, les évocations sensorielles et les rites collectifs (le "tambour" dans TM; "li demandé pardon" dans *Racines noires*) sont des moyens jugés adéquats et parfaitement fiables pour inventorier le passé et compléter l'Histoire lacunaire et fragmentaire. Plus que l'esprit rationnel, ils plongent dans cette rivière souterraine qu'est le passé antillais qui, selon Mariotte, continue de "grouiller sous sa peau, comme de la vermine dans une maison abandonnée" (PDP, 14-5). Mariotte revit son enfance au morne Pichevin en caressant la feuille de siguine, gri-gri soigneusement caché (PDP, 40-1); le parfum imaginé d'un plat de porc aux bananes vertes lui restititue entièrement sa visite à son "présumé père" emprisonné pour avoir assassiné le contremaître de l'usine. Simone Schwarz-Bart, et c'est pareil pour Paule Marshall et Toni Morrison, réclame l'héritage de leurs protagonistes dont les récits de vie révisent l'Histoire (Missy Dehn Kubitschek 1991). Ainsi, *Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle* s'inspire de la vie de la Guadeloupéenne Stéphanie Priccin qui fut pour l'auteure "le symbole de toute une génération de femmes connues, ici, à qui je dois d'être antillaise" (Toumson 1972;14).

L'histoire conçue par l'écrivain féminin est enfin *auto-réflexive.* Pour écrire son histoire à elle, pour balayer sa voie d'émancipation, la femme

noire ou de couleur doit trouver une voix authentiquement noire, acquérir son statut de locutrice à part entière. Elle le fera en s'appuyant sur la parole d'autres femmes qui ont été des "poteaux mitan" (poteau central dans le sanctuaire vaudou) dans la communauté noire. D'où le souci de présenter le récit comme un relais de paroles féminines. Télumée nous rapporte les dires (et les faits) de Reine Sans Nom qui, à son tour, nous avait légué ceux de sa mère Minerve. Reine Sans Nom est une conteuse d'histoire et une histoire contée, principe d'emboîtement et d'enchaînement qui garantit le continuum historique et dès lors la mise-en-scène de l'histoire. L'énoncé renvoie à l'énonciation, à l'acte d'écriture; la parole est le seul mode de transmission envisageable pour recueillir ce que Hyvrard appelle la mémoire de femmes (Hyvrard 1977: 125-6).

Un plat de porc aux bananes vertes (co-écriture de Simone et André Schwarz-Bart[4]) est à tous égards le "double" du bestseller schwarz-bartien. A la différence de Télumée Miracle, Mariotte finit complètement aliénée puisqu'elle ne sera racontée et donc, rappelée de personne. Alors que Télumée incarne l'histoire vivante du peuple guadeloupéen, alors que son récit de vie se confond avec celui d'autres femmes, et que ses paroles répètent celles de l'aïeule, Mariotte échoue dans son projet de réconciliation avec son passé (et avec la (grand-)mère), à plus forte raison avec celui des Martiniquais. Trois raisons expliquent ce raturage du passé individuel: la présence d'une grand-mère négrophobe qui lui ressasse que les Noirs sont une "race tombée" et que son "présumé père" ne valait même pas la peine d'être acheté esclave.

Ensuite, Mariotte ne remplit pas de rôle maternel: n'ayant pas d'enfant (qu'il soit adoptif ou non), elle ne peut s'assurer qu'elle sera racontée. L'histoire de Mariotte restera inconnue puisque non enregistrée. Enfin, Mariotte accuse toute la société martiniquaise de mesquinerie et de racisme: la Martinique est infernale, parce que tout un chacun y affronte et méprise un plus "noir" que soi. L'indigence matérielle (elle grandit sous la "période Robert", c.-à-d. pendant la Deuxième Guerre mondiale pendant laquelle la Martinique fut placée sous le régime de Vichy) et le lancinement généalogique (la question de "ses présumés pères" reste irrésolue) intensifient encore la mésentente et la méfiance.

Mariotte se juge elle-même responsable de sa propre disparition de l'histoire, de ne pas avoir laissé à la postérité aucune trace. C'est ce qu'elle exprime dans un de ses soliloques amers: "Tu vois, si t'étais restée au pays, toi aussi tu déverserais ton plein de contes dans les pupilles des

[4]On attend toujours sa traduction anglaise, alors que TM a été traduit en 12 langues. Le roman est difficile au niveau narratologique (structure, point de vue, etc...); selon certains, peu antillais parce que situé à Paris et parce qu'il traite du thème universel de la vieillesse avec une ironie "morbide".

enfants, comme faisait Man Louise; [...] même si t'étais défunte aujourd'hui, [...] il se trouverait bien quelqu'un pour venir te voir au cimetière – ne serait-ce que le jour de la Toussaint." (PDP, 138)

Les "griffonnages" annotés en "français de France" ne garantissent ni le repos éternel, ni l'entrée en histoire, puisqu'ils n'ont pas de destinataire. D'où le désespoir et la panique devant la mort qui contrastent fort avec la "résolution" de la dernière Lougandor. Autant la structure circulaire de *Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle* prouve que Télumée est venue à bout de l'histoire et s'est approprié son jardin et son morne, autant la narration fragmentaire et elliptique d'*Un Plat de porc aux bananes vertes* signifie l'itinéraire contraire. Le journal intime s'achève sur une fin ouverte: Mariotte tombe littéralement dans la neige, espace blanc où s'effacera toute trace. Les Cahiers symbolisent l'individualisme insalubre, la solitude schizophrénique découlant d'une incapacité à prendre en compte le passé, fût-il individuel ou collectif. Elle a beau "[s]'acagnarder dans le présent: vivre comme si [elle] étai[t] née dans l'asile" (PDP, 19), s'esseuler dans le dortoir de l'hospice parisien, le passé la harcèle jour et nuit. Véritable double de Télumée, Mariotte sombre dans la folie parce qu'elle rate à la fois le rapatriement dans l'île natale, l'inscription de son vécu et l'insertion dans une lignée de "négresses vaillantes."

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Sistren-Jamaica: Women's Theatre for Cultural Decolonization

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Introduction

SISTREN, a Jamaican women's theatre collective and cultural organization, established itself in the seventies, a time of social democratic leadership in Jamaica, a time of severe unemployment especially for women, but also a time of social vision. For more than two decades the group has been part of the Caribbean struggle for cultural recognition and decolonization. It grew out of the context of the women's movement in the sense that the women's movement legitimized women's examination of their own struggles, yet SISTREN wouldn't call themselves "feminists".[1] The members of the SISTREN theatre collective come from poor rural families. When they first met, they had no experience in theatre or performance whatsoever. Through a training programme, sponsored by the Jamaican Government, they were given the chance to become teacher assistants, who had to supervise students arriving very early for the afternoon shift at school and give them a sensible task. With the help of a tutor of the Jamaica School of Drama, Honor Ford-Smith, the women who later formed SISTREN acquired dramatechniques, knowledge in folk-music and dance.

When in 1977 a workers-week-concert was to take place, the women decided to get together in their spare time and create a play. This was the beginning of an exciting learning process which changed their lives fundamentally.

After SISTREN had professionalized their method of creating plays, they developed an educational workshop programme, which suited the aim of taking drama to working class communities.

Biographical Approach

When Honor Ford-Smith, the drama tutor, asked the women, "What do you want to do a play about?", all of them were sure they wanted to do

[1] Cf. Ford-Smith, Honor (1989): *Ring Ding in a Tight Corner,* Canada (The Women's Program, International Council for Adult Education), p. 21.

plays about how they suffer as women. A process of exchanging personal histories began. The women realized that they had a lot in common and that the conditions of their lives were a political matter. They decided to make politics themselves now by opening people's eyes, hearts and minds through theatre. To specify their personal experience, the women proceeded along three questions:

1. When did you first become aware of your oppression as a woman,
2. how did this affect your life,
3. how did you try to change your situation?[2]

Rape, ignorance about their own bodies, teenage pregnancy, exploitation, unemployment, oppression and discrimination were the things the women knew to talk about. With authenticity and directness, they made public those aspects of Jamaican women's lives which hadn't been addressed publicly before. Their first piece done for a workers-week-concert was called "Downpression Get a Blow". It was about female factory workers, the pressures they faced and the efforts they made to unionize in order to be able to demand basic rights. It was a tremendous success. Appreciation did not only come from working class people who felt their concerns had been met, but also from members of the theatre-scene who realized that this kind of theatre would be an enrichment of Jamaican culture.

Method

SISTREN came to the style and methodology of their work as a direct result of the problems and contradictions which confronted them while carrying out their aims of analyzing and commenting on the role of women in Jamaican society through theatre, to form into a self-reliant enterprise and to take drama to working class communities.

Before it comes to a presentation, the actresses have to go through the intensive process of developing the text for the play. To warm up and stimulate reflection every theatre session begins with physical exercises based on children's or question and answer games. This phase is followed by relaxation with music. Then the women sit down in a circle and everyone is asked to express something about a topic they have agreed on before. Everyone can jump up spontaneously and show what has gone through her mind. The rest of the members take over the role of the audience. So step by step all the possible feelings, ways of action and

[2]Their life-stories were collected in the book *Lionheart Gal* with Honor Ford-Smith (1986), London: The Women's Press.

expression come out. Then a lengthy discussion takes place about improvements, about how to make characterizations more exact, about the political and economical implications of the presented situations, about what to take and what to leave out. SISTREN go to libraries for further information or conduct interviews. Finally the dialogues are written down, the text derived from the improvisations gets its shape. Summarizing one can identify seven major methodological steps:

1. Warm-up,
2. discussion,
3. collecting information, improvisation,
4. presenting improvisations,
5. discussion - writing down the text,
6. final rehearsals,
7. première.

Stylistic Features

The most unusual feature in SISTREN's plays is that they are presented in Patois. Theories from different branches of research circle around the question, whether Patois is a language in its own right or a dialect. For SISTREN, the use of their own language clearly means liberation from colonialistic pressure. "Language is central to all power relations. Not to nurture such a language is to retard the imagination and power of the people who created it." The Patois' rhythm and imagery expresses the soul of the Jamaican people.

SISTREN often use children's games as dramatic tool. They provide a frame for actions and also crystallize the experience presented in a way everybody can understand. Using the games also has a symbolic meaning because the poor women from the country have been betrayed of their childhood. On stage they regain and reshape their real-life experiences. The idea of losers and winners is evoked and sure enough, in this game the women are the winners.

Another important aspect of SISTREN's work is the use of rituals as a metaphor for togetherness and being rooted in the African heritage, but also the intention to shed a critical light on religious practices in Jamaica. Social comment, irony and humor is conveyed by using mythological figures like Anansi or Trickster.

Special emphasis is put on their message by playing the male roles themselves. It gives them the chance to interpret the characters the way they see them.

Last not least, rhythm and music are crucial to SISTREN's work. They create text and music of songs from the basis of what can be heard in Jamaican everyday life, be it rap, reggae, gospel, or a hit from the radio which they integrate.

Rural Workshops and Theatre-In-Education

SISTREN's concern is not to perform for middle-class audiences in Kingston, but to multiply the process of how they themselves had become aware of the social and political situation in their country and share their newly gained knowledge with those who have no access to education. This meant they had to go to the country, stimulate discussion and interaction, learn about the problems people are facing and help them to organize themselves, to be able to act out on behalf of their own interest. For that purpose SISTREN designed a workshop programme, using the "Theatre-in-Education" method, briefly called TIE. As a theatre form in its own right, TIE emerged in Great Britain in 1965. Helped by the economic boom of the late sixties and early seventies, the first company was founded at Coventry and many followed. TIE work often has a social or political content, it does not baldly state a political message whatsoever, it offers participants an experience of a socio-political problem without giving a pat answer.[3] As I am going to demonstrate with the description of one of SISTREN's workshops, the idea of TIE is to involve the participants physically, mentally and emotionally and through this total involvement, allow them to learn and understand by discovery.

A workshop starts with the presentation of a short play from SISTREN's repertoire followed by a discussion. Then the participants are guided towards the creation of their own dramatical presentation based on themes of their daily lives. When the participants (mostly women) see SISTREN's play, they generally recognize their own situation and react immediately with lively comments. Once a woman was so enthused that she said: "Lord Jesus, how do you know all those things, how did you know about me, that you could put me in the play!" When the women start discussing, a member of SISTREN writes down notes about all the problems that have been mentioned by them. Then the women are asked to point out their main concern, to specify the most pressing problem they themselves, their families or the community are facing. In the case I am referring to now, it turned out that the community had been without water supply for

[3]Redington, Christine (1983), *Can Theatre Teach?*, Great Britain, p. 2.

three weeks.[4] They decided to do something to solve that water problem. The community water supply depends on a pump which needed repair. As warm-up activity proposed, the women were asked to imitate a water pump with their bodies. Trying to do this, it turned out that none of them really knew how such a pump worked. Luckily there was somebody else around, who knew about the pump and assisted the women to imitate its functioning. As main activity now, the participants were asked to think about possible solutions to the problem. They decided to send a delegation to the local Councillor, who was rarely seen in the community except during election time. Through role-playing, the participants worked out the way how to behave and argue with the Councillor.

The visit resulted in the decision to send a water truck to the area, on definite days and at definite hours, twice per week.

Critical Consciousness

Working out something together did not only have a financial effect for SISTREN. It also facilitated personal change. Before they had come together, they were not aware of all the things that were inside them, that they were living examples of what it means to be a woman in post-independence Jamaica. Although I cannot deploy all its philosophical assumptions here, the concept of "conscientization" developed by the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire seems very useful to explain what "personal change" means with respect to SISTREN. The basic idea of the phenomenon of "conscientization" is a human process, found in the evolution of man, at the level of his consciousness. Knowledge of consciousness is something inherent to man; it is something that characterizes him and that basically helps him to relate to others and to nature. It helps him to explain the phenomena of life and to look for solutions to the problems posed by his environment. Freire claims that in the process of human evolution, consciousness goes through three different stages:

1. Magical consciousness, which does not consider itself superior to the facts or free to understand them, but takes them, attributing to them a superior power which dominates from the outside.
2. Naive consciousness, which considers itself superior to the facts, dominating them from outside, and therefore believing itself free to understand them as it fits and

[4]French, Joan (1985), "Three Experiments with Popular Theatre", in: Organizing Women Through Drama in Rural Jamaica, *Ideas and Action,* No.138 (FAO Magazine).

3. Critical consciousness, which is the representation of things and data as they exist empirically, in their causual and circumstantial correlations. It means that man can look at himself; he can observe reality and analyze it. This is to say, critical consciousness requires an active character.

The phenomenon of action and reflection in men is only found in a dialectic relationship with social practice and when the level of critical consciousness is reached.

Conscientization as a human fact is a constantly opening way, it is a permanent process of education. Freire also indicates that nobody becomes conscientizised by himself, the group consciousness is important. The process of conscientization within SISTREN occurred from the basis of the group which was given the chance to establish itself through the "Special Employment Programme" of the Government. As I have explained earlier, a first qualitative change in consciousness took place when they realized they were all suffering from the same social conditions. Then there was the help of the tutor who never lost the overall view, gave impulses for other ways of thinking, was able to channel experiences into acting and let it derive into the final artistic form.

SISTREN come from a social environment where magical thinking and superstition especially in the area of sexuality are very common. In her book, *Mama Africa,* Evelyn Heinemann describes for example the belief that a woman becomes sterile if she eats certain fruit or vegetable, or that it is predetermined how many children a woman will have. If she practices birth control, she will not be healthy until she has given birth to all the children.[5] The Jamaican world is full of duppies. To meet a duppy in a dream is not dangerous, but they are active at night, "Rolling Calf" and "Hooping Boy" are said not to be very friendly and handsome in the darkness.

The magical dimension of Jamaican daily life is an integral part of SISTREN's plays. For SISTREN themselves though, the magic has lost its direct power because they have reflected on its effect, have found symbols and images to present it on stage, they have developed a critical, active consciousness and it is this consciousness they are communicating with the audience.

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[5]Heinemann, Evelyn (1990), *Mama Africa: Das Trauma der Versklavung,* Frankfurt/Main, p. 117f.

Images and Symbols

The arts have always been an important reservoir of resistance in the Caribbean. Rex Nettleford, a well-known Jamaican choreographer, dancer and cultural theorist writes: "As foremost creative activity serving Jamaican cultural resistance - not only throughout the periods of slavery and colonialism, but also following independence - dance was a primary instrument of survival. First it is a skill that depends on the physical and mental capacities of the survivor".[6] In Kumina rituals in Jamaica, dance becomes the language of communication with the gods, the ancestors and the community. Departing from the recollection of their experiences of childhood, growing up and the transition to adulthood, SISTREN have in "Jamaican style" created powerful images and symbols of Caribbean femininity. They have revitalized the power of Nanny of the Maroons, the national heroine, who fought against the British, by making her story visible and emotionally perceivable on stage. The use of ritualistic elements became a code for reflection.

On the other hand, the popular tradition of folk songs, stories and other forms of oral literature have been contradictory with regard to women.

SISTREN had to create their own imagery and content by linking themselves with early Jamaican nationalist-feminist writers like Una Marson and Louise Bennett who struggled to build a dramatic movement which would reflect the voices of the working class, especially women. SISTREN also use the dramatic arts to define their identity as different from the dominant capitalist and European-derived culture.

Despite financial problems the members of the SISTREN theatre collective are facing right now, they will continue to fight for the rights of Jamaican women and teach others how to speak out and act on their own behalf. Becky Knowles, a member of SISTREN, has founded another young women's group, called "Teens-in-Action". Teens also create plays around topics related to their lives and present them at the annual national theatre festival. Once they won a gold medal for the best presentation.

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[6]Nettleford, Rex (1985), *Dance Jamaica,* New York, p. 20.

The enlightened historical discourse deliberately eliminates a particularity pertaining to any other approach: the knowledge that it is neither total nor infinite. It will always consist of a collection of „(hi)stories" which changes in the course of time and with the change of the story-teller. The diversity of views and interpretations represents a necessary diversity of voices due to the fact that each history and story depends on a story-teller who will transcribe the past to the requirements of the present. Whenever they are told, each story links two levels of time – the time of the event and the time of its narration.